

## Project Proposal

# INTERNATIONAL HOUSE OF DIALOGUE AND RECONCILIATION IN STOLAC



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## **INTERNATIONAL FORUM BOSNIA**

*International Forum Bosnia (IFB) is a non-governmental organisation, founded in Sarajevo in 1997. It brings together individuals and institutions from Bosnia and Herzegovina and abroad committed to the creation of a harmonious and united society, based on dialogue, trust, and respect. It advocates best practice in the fields of human rights protection, the rule of law, and democracy. IFB members are committed to the promotion of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a plural society with a very rich political and cultural heritage, a heritage we believe to be a significant resource for the development of a unified polity exemplifying the best aspects of the European spirit. IFB members believe such development requires a new intellectual community capable of analysing social and political behaviour and views and of developing the new understandings required for trust to be restored across society.*

*IFB approaches these goals in two ways. The first involves the deconstruction of the divisive political and social ideologies based on ethnicity, religion, and other exclusive world-views which have been underlying causes of mistrust, intolerance, and social exclusion and major generators of social tension and conflict in the region. The second involves the systematic development and promotion of a new synthesis for Bosnia and Herzegovina based on a vision of social development free from fear, hostilities, and tensions. Our members advocate research into the all aspects of Bosnia and Herzegovina from the widest possible range of perspectives. The aim is to build a new understanding of Bosnian unity-in-plurality through a long-term research project covering all aspects of society, especially geopolitics, education, cultural and religious traditions and dialogue, environmental and ecological perspectives, advanced and information technologies, energy policy and responsible use of natural and renewable resources, gender issues, regional co-operation, distributive justice, sustainable development, the rule of law, human rights, social inclusion, and other issues related to efficient transition towards harmonious membership in the community of European countries. Two major contributions of IFB are the organisation of intellectual gatherings and undertakings (workshops, panels, symposia, conferences, public lectures, exhibitions, the advancement of knowledge about Bosnia and Herzegovina, etc.), and the presentation of significant perspectives on culture, society, scholarship, and politics related to Bosnia and Herzegovina and its place in the world through its journal Forum Bosnae, working documents, and the IFB web page: <http://www.ifbosna.org.ba>.*

*International Forum Bosnia operates through its members, projects, and associated ventures. Its headquarters are in Sarajevo. There are three regional centres, in Banja Luka, Mostar, and Tuzla. There are thirteen thematic-research centres: the Centres for Strategic Studies, Education, Language Studies, Media, Protection of Natural Heritage, Student Programmes, Historical Studies, Regional Cooperation, Gender Issues, Cultural Heritage, Interreligious Dialogue, Technology and Economic Development (with two sections: entrepreneurship and public/private partnership and advanced and information technology) and Interdisciplinary research of Visual Culture.*



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## Abstract

The Board of International Forum Bosnia proposes the construction of an **International House of Dialogue and Reconciliation** in the southern Bosnian town of Stolac. The centre will work primarily with ethnic, cultural, and religious groups between whom there is a history or prospect of tension and conflict. It will also promote social and cultural regeneration.

The centre will focus on issues of identities, belief systems, tradition and modern society, and the sources and resolution of conflict. There will be a particular accent on majority-minority relations, social exclusion, cultural recognition, non-assimilationist forms of inclusion, pluralist communities, and explicit and tacit forms of discrimination. A core goal is the creation of a truly open society in which religious and cultural values have a place and to which they can make a valid contribution.

We believe that a proper appreciation of these issues can only develop where community and quality of life are put centre stage and the fundamental equality of all human beings, the universal right to recognition, and human dignity as the condition for a life worth living are stressed.

The centre will work on three levels (local, national, and international) and its activities will have at least three aspects:

- The organisation of lectures, seminars, workshops, conferences, programme activities, projects, etc. to promote intellectual and public discourse on tradition, religious values, culture, reconciliation, and related topics;
- The organisation of courses and cultural activities and the provision of cultural services to promote cultural and social regeneration;
- The organisation and promotion of craft activities and farmhouse level production to promote cultural and social regeneration and provide an income stream for the organisation (as well as the craftspeople and farmhouses involved).

We propose that the centre be established in the town of Stolac, in the southern part of Bosnia and Herzegovina for two reasons. These are the town's recent history as one of the areas worst affected by the manufactured ethnic and religious conflicts of recent years and its longer-term history as a plural community in which cultures and faiths have met, interacted, and coexisted for millennia.

Provision of dedicated facilities for the centre requires the renovation and/or construction of 1000 m<sup>2</sup> of usable accommodation on an already purchased site. We estimate the setup costs will be approximately 570,000 Euro.

Annual running costs should be in the region of 80,000 Euro, with the proviso that additional funds will be required for programmes and activities.

We propose the creation of an endowment trust fund to fund the construction of the centre and its minimum running costs. Its programs and activities would be funded on the basis of government and EU grants, grants from international non-governmental organisations and foundations, funded projects, private donations, and the centre's own income generating activities.

## INTERNATIONAL HOUSE OF DIALOGUE AND RECONCILIATION IN STOLAC

### 1. Core proposal

The Board of International Forum Bosnia proposes the establishment of an International House for Dialogue and Reconciliation in the southern Bosnian town of Stolac.

The main purposes of the centre are:

1. To promote the development of a truly open society in which the abuse and demonization of religious and cultural values may be replaced by a culture of tolerance and respect. This will be based upon the inclusion of all social groups and currents of opinion in free and frank discussion, debate, projects, and civil initiatives.
2. To combat the causes of alienation and the flight to extremism and radicalism, whether in the form of religious, ethnic, or nationalist fundamentalism or the equally destructive forms of cultural and social nihilism.
3. To conduct and promote concrete activities for the social regeneration of Stolac town and area based upon the revaluation of tradition, traditional crafts, traditional methods of food production, and traditional products. This is not a form of primitivism or rejection of modern life. We promote a balanced life in the community that draws strength from the heritage bequeathed to us by our forefathers. We also note it is an excellent means of promoting tourism, for which the Herzegovina area is particularly suited, as the hinterland of the Dalmatian coast.

### 2. Justification

Religious, cultural, and ethnic differences increasingly *appear* to be sources of tension, misunderstanding, and conflict. While there are instances where this may be true, it would, in our view, be more accurate to say that it is the abuse of such differences that is the problem. Bosnia and Herzegovina is a nearly unique case in Europe of a pluralist society in which there is no majority ethnicity or religion. In the country's long history, this has generally become a problem only at times when changes in the regional political context have combined with major social changes (e.g. the transition to modernity, the introduction of Yugoslav socialism, and its collapse). The combination of foreign interests and weakened social structure is what has encouraged the politicization of religious feeling, crystallization of ethnic identities, and development of nationalist movements.

This has little to do with the nature of religious or cultural tradition itself. Conflict related to access to and control over resources and the denial of freedoms thrives on injustice, inequality, unfairness, and frustration. It mobilises individuals into interest groups, often based on common markers that bind people in alliance against clearly defined and all too often demonised others. The content of ethnicity, culture, and religion may provide such markers of solidarity, difference, and even superiority, but this is not essential to the nature of cultural or religious identity. It is a consequence of the conditions of modernity, industrialisation, and the development of mass society, which has all too often lead to the destruction of community, social flattening, atomisation, and the loss of social structure.

The breakdown of fundamental processes and structures of socialisation has stunted ethical and moral development and eroded civic consciousness. This is particularly true of areas without a history of affluence, a strong state, or centralized and standardizing education systems and media. They suffer an ever greater spread of alienation and anomie. Forms of communitarian or social identity are all too often sought in or through radical organisations and associations which express their members' common sense of alienation from the social mainstream. Many are drawn into increasingly radical associations, which embrace "fundamentalist" understandings of morality and ethics -- certainty derived from subordination of the will and the intelligence to rigid and dehumanising authority.

This is in direct contradiction to the traditional roles of religious and cultural tradition and ethnic identity as sources of personal and ethical orientation, social solidarity, and the social virtues of mercy, charity, fairness, justice. Authentic religious and cultural creativity necessarily involves a commitment to the good

that transcends the merely personal or advantageous in favour of a universal viewpoint that takes into account the needs, rights, and duties of all as equal children of the divine.

The centre's mission is to counter the understanding of cultures and religions as mutually excluding sources of conflict between groups. It aims to replace this with an understanding of cultures and faiths as mutually constitutive. They come into being through their interaction, as partners in an eternal dialogue with each other as well as with the divine. They shape each other through their mutual influence and borrowings, but also their specific differences. The result can and should be multiple coexisting techniques for exploring and enjoying the full richness of human existence.

This requires the development of a well-balanced public sphere, in which matters of common concern and interest can be brought to light, discussed, given adequate formulation, and tackled. We particularly stress the need to move beyond the exclusively secular model of social dialogue, in which religious and cultural traditions are considered private matters of no relevance to the public sphere. We look on the public space as an area where religious and secular meet in a balanced encounter. In particular, we believe that prejudice against explicitly holding and expressing religious and cultural values has allowed the power of religion to be hijacked by its true enemies, extremists and fundamentalists.

Nowhere offers better prospects for this than Bosnia and Herzegovina, where there is a long standing, if embattled, history of peaceful coexistence in plural communities.

### **3. Why Stolac?**

The town of Stolac has historically been an important crossroads. Settlement in the area long predates the coming of the Slavic peoples, with some evidence going back as much as 18,000 years. In the Hellenistic period, it was the centre of one of the more important Illyrian kingdoms, that of the Daors people, whose citadel is still to be seen on the promontory of Ošanići. It has yielded some of the most impressive examples of Roman mosaic found in Bosnia and Herzegovina, now on display at the National Museum in Sarajevo. The town served as a centre of Roman, mediaeval, and Ottoman administration. The hill above the town is dominated by the impressive remains of the mediaeval fortress of Vidoška, while the slopes of the hills and the three valleys that make up the town were, until the recent war, a maze of traditional ottoman stone houses and public buildings. In the area around the town are some of the most important historical and natural monuments of Bosnia and Herzegovina, including the major cluster of Stećci at Radimlja, the important Vjetrenica cave, the nature reserve of Hutovo Blato, and the stone age Badanj cave, the fortress of Hadžibegova Kula, the Marian shrine at Hrasno, and the Orthodox monastery of Zavala. Stolac was also (and remains) a centre of the vibrant oral epic tradition that inspired Milman Parry's rediscovery of the true nature of Homeric verse.

The degradation and destruction of Stolac dates back at least a hundred years, as the soul of the town was gradually destroyed by the processes of modernization and the rise of the modern ideologies of nationalism, capitalism, and communism – the three forms of social orientation which sacrifice both present and past to a utopian future. The period after WWII was a particularly painful one as everything redolent of tradition was at best neglected, at worst rooted out and destroyed. What did survive this time was the spirit of coexistence and mutual tolerance that the multi-ethnic town had always enjoyed.

Before the recent war, the ethnic make-up of the municipality of Stolac was as mixed as that of the country as a whole, with around 43% of the population Bosniaks, a further 33% Croats, and 21% Serbs. There was no majority and consequently no minority. The town included important public buildings belonging to all three groups, who were in a relationship of symbiosis. As a result of the intimidation and violence exercised on the mass of the citizenry by an organized few during the war, this had changed drastically by 1995. The Croat contingent was above 90%, reflecting that group's domination of the town during the war, but also the influx of Croat refugees from other areas. Bosniaks accounted for less than 10% and Serbs for around 1%. This reflects the fact that the pre-war municipality of Stolac was, like Bosnia herself, split by the war, so that half the pre-war municipality is now in the Republika Srpska (Berkovići).

YEAR	TOTAL	Bosniaks	Croats	Serbs	Yugoslavs	Others
~1991~	18,681	8,101 (43.36%)	6,188 (33.12%)	3,917 (20.96%)	307 (1.64%)	168 (0.89%)
~1998~	12,050	900	11,000	120		
~2006~	11,941	4,102	7,344	405		

Thanks to the commitment of the people of the town and of Bosnia and Herzegovina more generally, the balance has been partially restored. Many of the Croats from other areas have gone back to their pre-war homes, while many of the Bosniaks from Stolac have also returned, so that they now make up approximately one third of the population.

During the past 20 years, Stolac has therefore suffered problems of the sort considered typical for Bosnia and Herzegovina, in terms of conflict apparently based on irreconcilable ethnic and religious differences, massive destruction of housing, public facilities, and historical and cultural heritage, concerted obstruction of return and reconciliation, and apparently insuperable barriers of sectarianism and entrenched hostility, including one of the most visible cases of obstruction to joint schooling and fair representation in the municipal structures. The town has almost become a byword for the intractable nature of the Bosnian problem, a symbol in the same way as the Gaza Strip or the Falls Road.

In spite of this and the official obstacles, there has been major progress over recent years and there is great willingness and desire to recover what has been lost. This is particularly evident in the successful initiatives to renovate and rebuild major public buildings, including the major mosques of the town, the Serbian Orthodox Church and its graveyard, the old bridges, and a number of the most important older houses. Further such projects include the planned renovation of the old stone water mills that line the upper course of the river.

A particularly significant initiative has been the International Youth Centre for the Protection of Cultural Heritage, which has organized annual international conferences and summer schools at Stolac and Mostar for the past 4 years on themes of religious and cultural tolerance and coexistence, with the attendance of scholars and activists from throughout Bosnia, Europe, the United States, and many other locations around the globe. These summer schools have always included a workshop on the rebuilding and restoration of public monuments in the town.

#### 4. Elements and Activities

The centre will have a number of aspects and will be active on the local, national, regional, and wider international levels, depending on which aspect is in question.

Local:

- Promoting tolerance, dialogue, reconciliation, and regeneration within the town and area of Stolac. There will be a particular emphasis on finding ways around the political culture of obstruction which has created artificial barriers and prevented joint cultural ventures.
- Preserving and promoting the cultural heritage of the town and area. This includes built heritage, lore and traditions, oral and written cultural heritage, the understanding and appreciation of its history, and the preservation of valuable aspects of the disappearing traditional way of life (crafts and skills, traditional horticulture and herb lore, culinary traditions, etc.). An important aspect will be finding ways to present the cultural heritage of the town as enriching all groups and the destruction or neglect of that heritage as impoverishing all groups.
- Promoting small-to-medium businesses based on traditional crafts, horticulture and artisanal agricultural production and providing a showcase and sales mechanism for the production of local artists and craftspeople. This will be done through regular courses and exhibitions, a regular craft fair and market, and one or more permanent outlets in the town, as well as distribution through major tourist centres (e.g. Počitelj, Mostar old town, Neum, Međugorje, and Sarajevo). Linking up traditional production and crafts with tourism will be a priority. One possibility will be for the centre to develop itself as a brand to market produce as a source of income, as well as a way of stimulating local production (e.g. traditionally produced jams, cordials, dried fruits, sweets, fabrics, clothing, and similar goods that combine the best aspects of traditional and modern design).
- Continuing the work of the International Centre for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage in promoting knowledge and understanding of the monuments in the area, developing their tourist potential, and their incorporation into educational programmes (sponsoring school visits, projects, controlled archaeological digs with student participation, the erection of information plaques and the production of leaflets, etc.).
- Promoting a vibrant cultural life that draws on the traditions and traditional culture of the various ethnic and religious groups in the area, in ways that stress the values of cross-fertilization and the interaction of coexisting cultural traditions. This may include the promotion of theatrical groups, reading clubs, discussion groups, etc., as well as organized courses in various arts, crafts, skills, and cultural topics of interest to the public. This will involve bringing in lecturers and facilitators from outside the town, from regional and national intellectual centres.
- The **Mak Dizdar Summer School**, an annual one week event on topics related to the literary, cultural, and artistic history and heritage of the immediate and wider region. Associated with this will be the Stone Sleeper scholarships for writers and artists from Bosnia and neighbouring countries, which will offer them accommodation and access to the centre's resources to assist in the completion of current work.
- The Ćor Huso Reading Room and Internet Centre open to local school children and members of the public, with a focus on local and national history, the religious traditions, and the customs and culture of the peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the wider region. This will also act as a centre for a collection of video recordings of the traditional oral epic for which the Stolac region is famous.

National:

- Provision of a retreat facility to serve the promotion of tolerance, dialogue, reconciliation, and coexistence at the national and regional levels, as a location in which differences and similarities can be recognized, articulated, and explored openly and frankly, as well as one in which reconciliation and conflict resolution activities may take place. It is envisaged that the courses may be offered to the police forces and the Armed Forces and similar groups.
- Provision of a focal point for the coordination and promotion of partnerships and expertise in cultural, ethnic, and religious dialogue and reconciliation, drawing on the experiences and needs of Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- Organization of regular seminar and conference activities to promote tolerance, dialogue, reconciliation, and regeneration for participants from around the country and the wider region, including the continuation of the existing annual academic conference series on religious diversity and tolerance and

the associated youth summer schools, organized by International Forum Bosnia and the International Centre for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage and currently in its fourth year.

- The centre will also make its facilities available to other institutions and companies for similar events, when not otherwise in use, as a means of generating income.

International:

- The centre will develop partnerships and relationships with similar organizations in other countries in the region. These partnerships will allow the centre to act as a gateway between Bosnia and Herzegovina and international efforts and processes in those other countries. We expect this to result in regional initiatives and cooperation on issues of defusing potential conflicts, improving relations between formal religious and cultural organizations as well as within and between the communities they affect, and helping to resolve existing conflict situations.

The creation of the International Centre for Dialogue, Reconciliation, and Regeneration involves two parallel core processes:

- The first is the development of physical facilities in Stolac itself.
- The second is the development of a programme of activities for the Centre.

Additional elements include the identification and development of income-generating activities to be associated with the Centre.

The development of facilities in Stolac:

- First phase – the identification and purchase of a suitable site for the centre (already completed).
- Second phase – architectural plans, planning permission, and fundraising.
- Third phase – reconstruction of the existing house and the construction of the new building, totalling 1000 m<sup>2</sup> of gross building space on a plot of 650 m<sup>2</sup>, with conference and seminar facilities, a library, a meditation room and garden, a kitchen and refectory, accommodation, bathrooms, and offices.
- Fourth phase – integration of the existing facilities and activities in the town under the aegis of International Forum Bosnia and the International Youth Centre for Cultural Heritage. These include the Mehmedbašić Endowment house in Brade. This is an already renovated complex, including a two-storey old stone house with outhouses and gardens, offering some 70 m<sup>2</sup> of conference and seminar space in 2 rooms (for groups of up to 20), as well as a further 3 rooms for accommodation, office space, and a functioning modern kitchen, on a plot of around 600 m<sup>2</sup>, suitable for outdoor events or the erection of a marquee.

The development of a programme of activities:

- The first phase will involve instituting local courses, summer schools, exhibitions, and conferences, as well as a manageable number of national and international level gatherings per year.
- Connections will be built up with similar institutions in other countries facing similar problems and challenges to Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- The activities will build upon already existing programmes and partnerships at all three levels, in particular the current International Youth Centre's flagship Stolac Summer School, now in its fourth year, and the International Forum Bosnia's annual International Conference on Toleration in Stolac and Mostar, also in its fourth year.



Attendees at the International Summer School in Stolac hosted by the International Youth Centre for Cultural Heritage



While the Centre will be able to generate some income from its core activities, namely charging for attendance at seminars and conferences, and may charge membership fees, etc., this cannot be expected to do more than defray a portion of the real costs. The Centre's assets will have to be managed pro-actively to ensure that they generate the maximum possible income. In our view, some of the best ways to do this include:

- Hiring out the Centre's facilities;
- Running for-profit courses, like language learning, computer skills, cookery, etc.
- Offering week-long residential courses in the development of traditional skills, like traditional cooking, soap and scent making, paper making, weaving, leatherworking, wood carving, winemaking, etc.
- Developing the Centre as a brand for the marketing of high quality craft products and local farmhouse produce, from local honey, preserves, jams and dried fruits through pomegranate juice and fruit and herb teas to smoked meats and cheeses to wines and specialty liqueurs (e.g. those made by Catholic or Orthodox monks).
- Establishing a craft sales and local tourism information centre, with a coffee shop and restaurant (no such facility currently exists in Stolac), possibly with a regular video presentation on local history and sites of interest;
- Making the Centre's accommodation available as a hostel during peak tourist months;

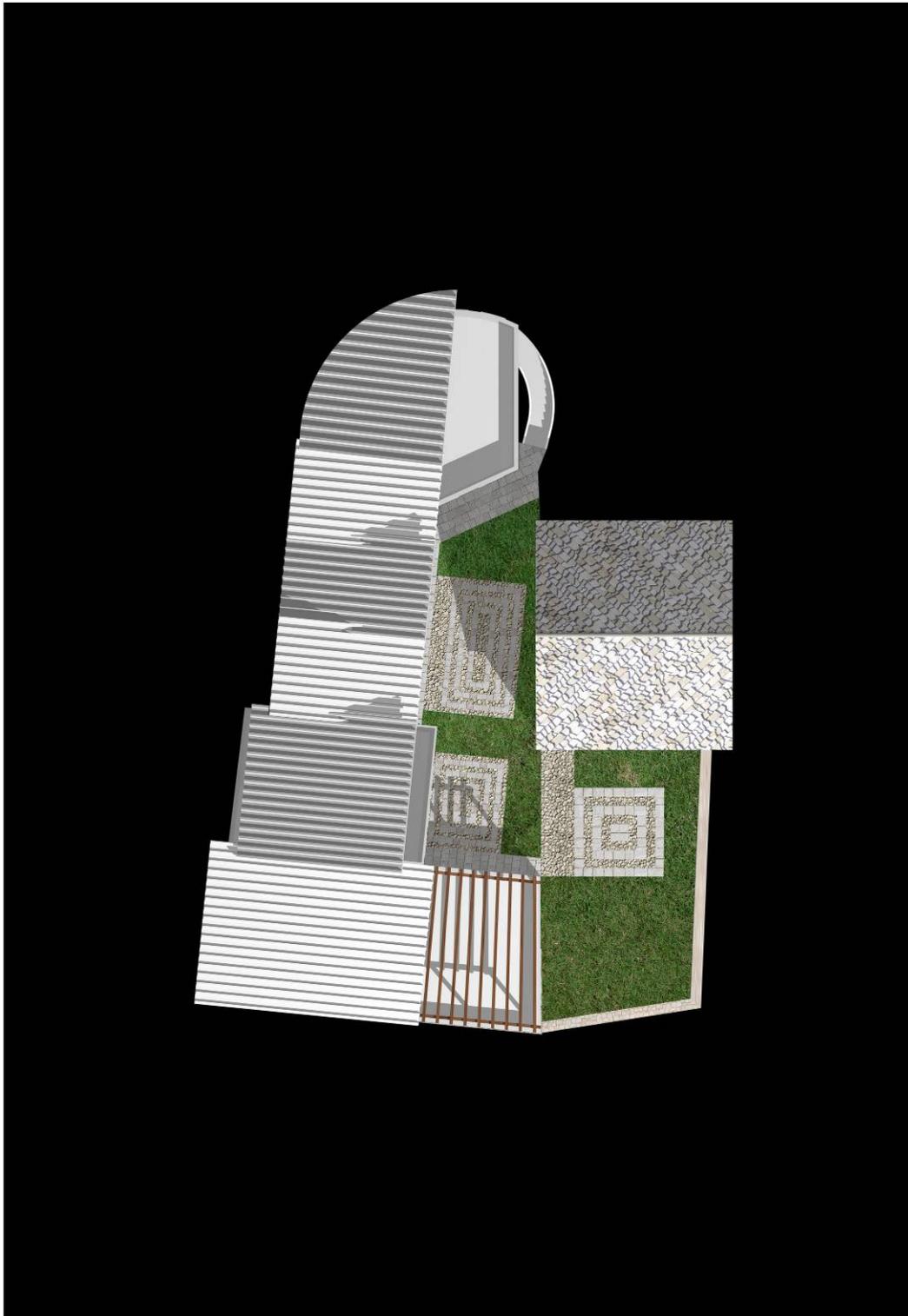
These activities will not be merely income-generating, as they will serve the goal of raising the level of community life, bringing visitors to the town, and providing tourist accommodation and catering services which are currently sorely lacking. The promotion of local farmhouse produce and crafts has obvious knock-on benefits, while providing a sort of local interpretation centre can only help increase interest in the areas many important monuments and natural sights. This should help make Stolac a natural place of interest for visitors to the Dalmatian coast and to Međugorje.

## 5. Physical Infrastructure

It is envisaged that the Centre will initially have two core premises in Stolac. These are the main Centre complex and the existing premises of the International Youth Centre for Cultural Heritage. An additional out of town site may also be purchased, as well as a number of smaller derelict premises around the town. Should funds permit, premises may also be purchased or rented in Mostar and Sarajevo for the exhibition and sale of the products of arts and craft activities and as bases for liaison and publicizing the Centre's activities.

## 6. The Main Location and the IHDR building

The main location will have buildings of approximately 800 m<sup>2</sup> of space, comprising conference and seminar rooms, a library, accommodation, kitchen and dining facilities, and administrative offices. The facilities would be sufficient to hold meetings of up to 150 participants, to feed up to 50, and to house up to 20. A 650 m<sup>2</sup> plot of land has already been identified and purchased for the Centre.



*Situated IHDR building on the site purchased with old house on the right and new building on the left side*

There is a three hundred year-old stone house on the plot, which will be restored. This building has two storeys of 60 m<sup>2</sup> net space each. The renovated house will include two rooms upstairs and a semi-enclosed terrace, with 25 m<sup>2</sup> of office space downstairs, and a 30 m<sup>2</sup> workshop room, with access to a private garden downstairs.

A new building will also be constructed, with a gross area of approximately 880 m<sup>2</sup>, providing 750 m<sup>2</sup> of net space on three storeys, plus basement.

The Ground Floor will house the reception, a shop, restrooms, the main auditorium and two further lecture halls or seminar rooms.

The 1st floor will house kitchen facilities, a cafe cum restaurant with terrace, and a number of single and double bedrooms. The 2nd floor will house the library and further bedrooms. All bedrooms will be ensuite.

There will be a small 3rd floor office area, while the basement Level will include service areas and additional lavatories. The approximately 300 m<sup>2</sup> of garden and courtyard area will be laid out so as to allow it to be used for seminars, film showings, receptions, etc.

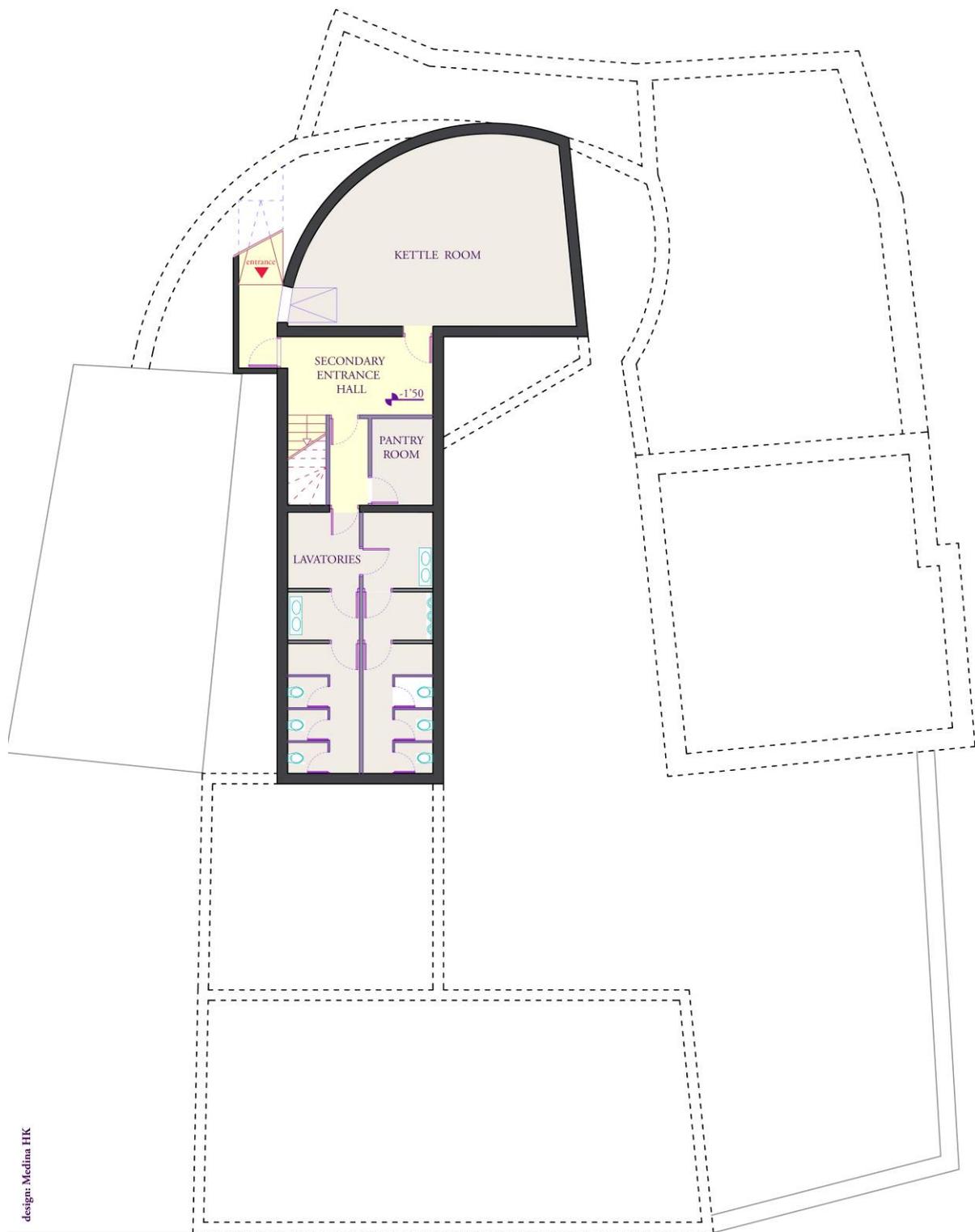


*View from the south towards the new building and its inner courtyard*

While the Ór Huso Library and Research Centre will house a small collection of books and recordings on relevant themes (no more than a few thousand volumes), the focus will be on facilitating access to research materials via the internet. It will be outfitted with computers for 8 users and fast internet access. Depending on cost, the Centre may purchase access to relevant online collections of journals and books. Wireless internet will be available throughout the complex. In addition to the computer equipment, camera equipment will be purchased to allow proceedings to be filmed and discussion and interviews to be recorded. It is envisaged that these facilities will be made available to members of the public from the town (possibly subject to some form of membership or registration).

The kitchen facilities will be semi-industrial, making it possible for them to be used for self-catering for smaller groups and for larger-scale catering when there are larger groups present or conferences or similar major activities are being held.

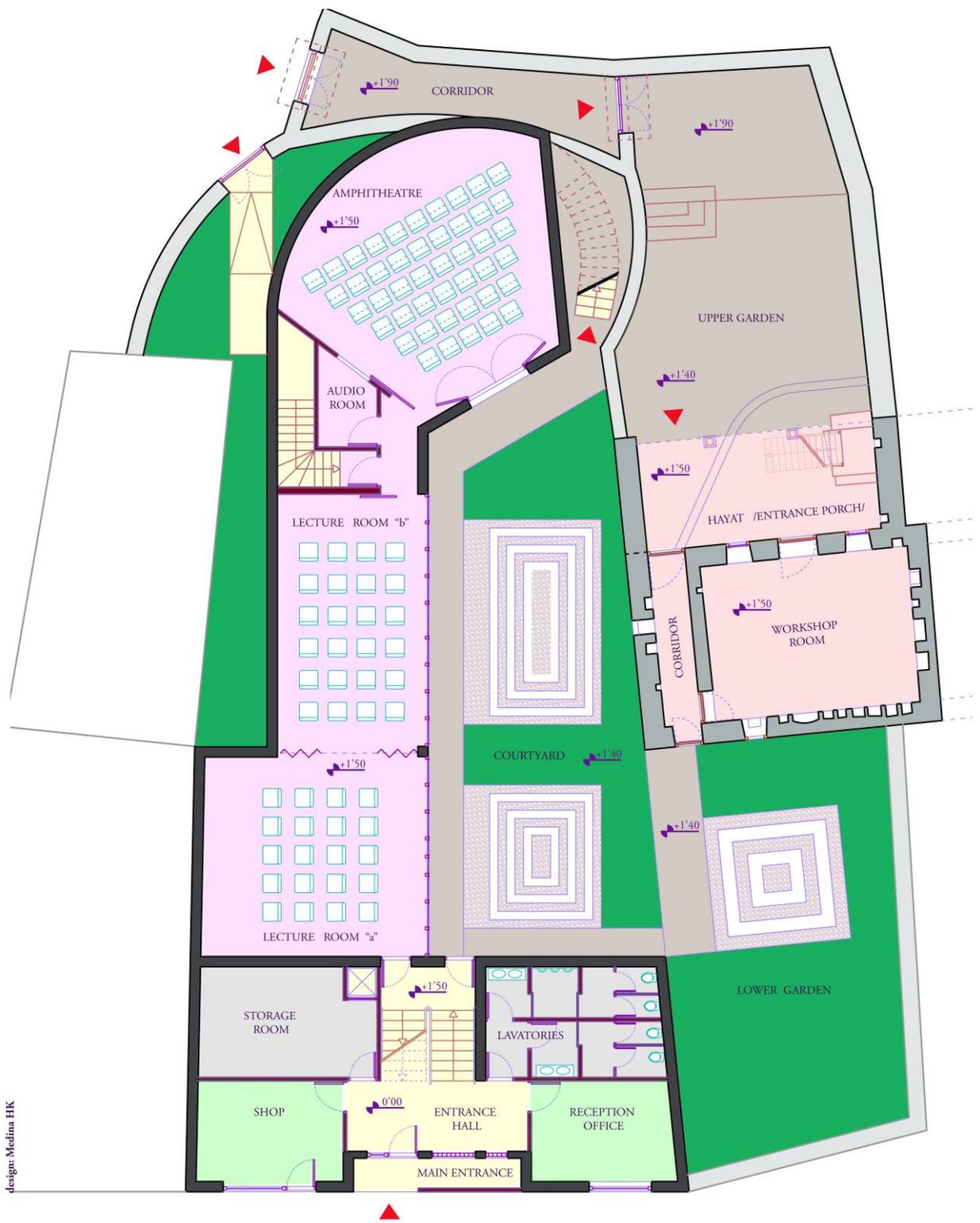
The three main seminar rooms in the new building will be provided with moveable seats and tables, to allow maximum flexibility of use. There will be moveable partitions between the rooms, to allow them to be used in combination, as well as a moveable podium, sound system, projector, and screen for when larger meetings, presentations, or film screenings are held.



design: Medina HK

BASEMENT LEVEL





design: Medina HK

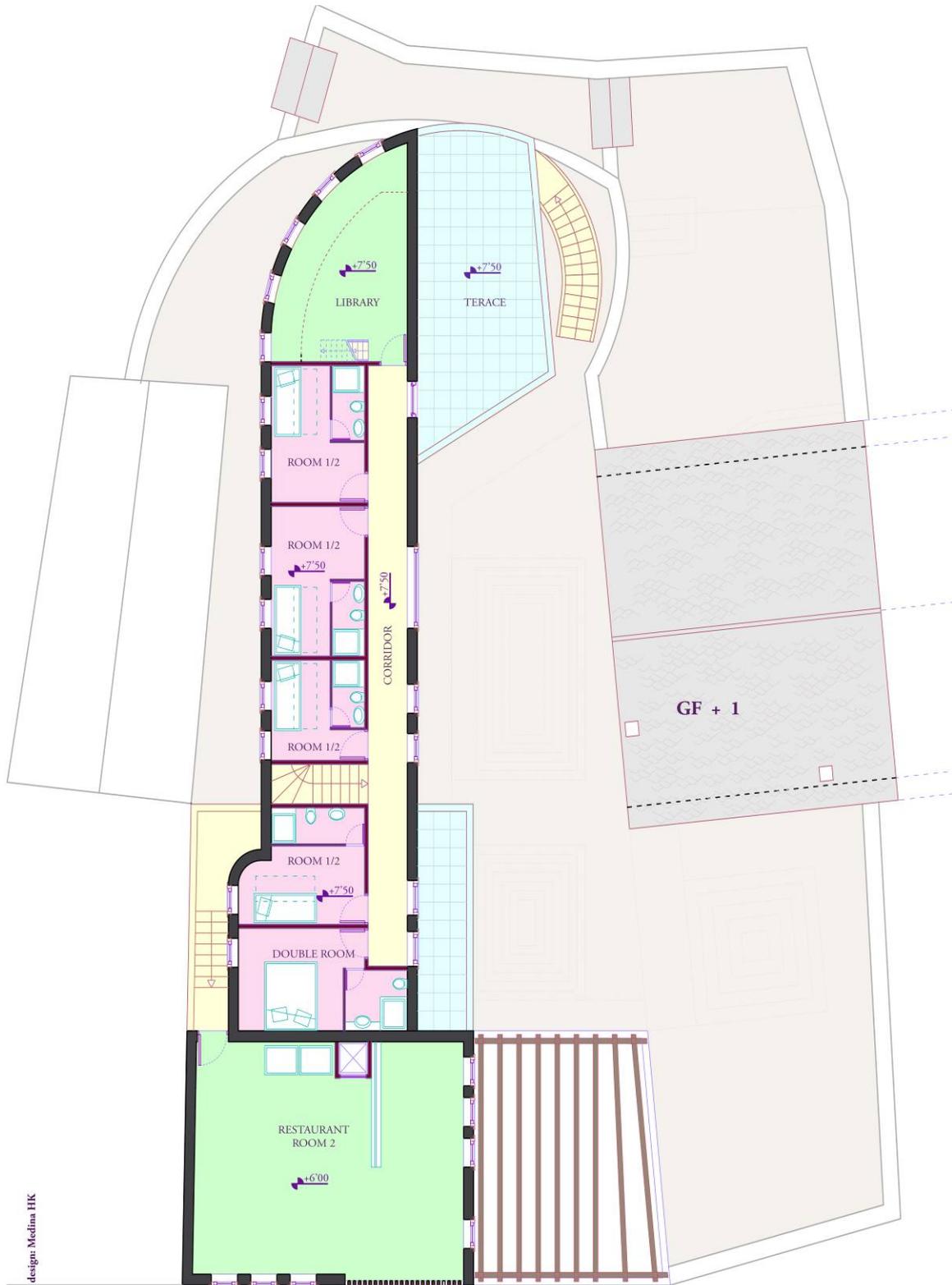
GROUND FLOOR LEVEL





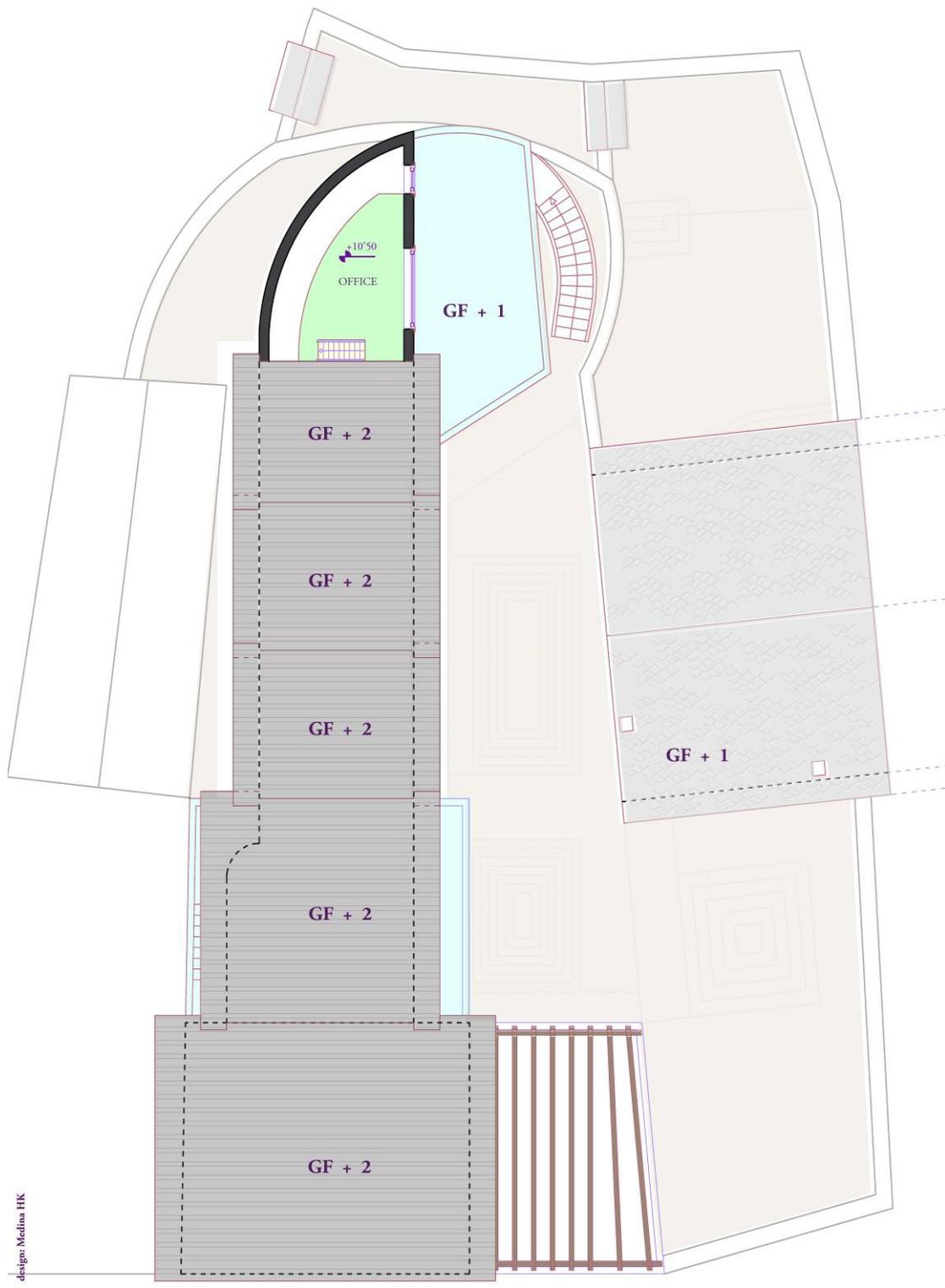
1 st FLOOR LEVEL





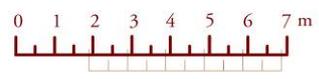
2 nd FLOOR LEVEL





design: Medina HK

3rd FLOOR LEVEL





*View from the east towards the new building and its inner courtyard*



*West view towards the main entrance facade*

## 7. The Mehmedbašić Endowment House

This is an already renovated complex, used by the International Youth Centre for Cultural Heritage, a non-governmental organization in Stolac, with strong links to International Forum Bosnia. The IYC will become part of the new International House for Dialogue and Reconciliation.

The complex comprises a two-storey old stone house with outhouses and gardens, offering some 70 m<sup>2</sup> of conference and seminar space in 2 rooms (for groups of up to 20), as well as a further 3 rooms for accommodation, office space, and a functioning modern kitchen, on a plot of around 600 m<sup>2</sup>, suitable for outdoor events or the erection of a marquee. Its renovation was organised in conjunction with the IYC Čuprija Summer School.

It is envisaged that the Mehmedbašić Endowment House will serve as an annex to the main premises, providing overflow space during conferences and seminars as well as a location for smaller events. Depending on the development of programme activities, it may also serve as the premises for larger projects, including the initial income generating activities envisaged.



*Volunteers working on the restoration of the Mehmedbašić endowment house*



*Restored Mehmedbašić endowment house*

## 8. Additional facilities

If the activities of the Centre develop according to the envisaged dynamic, the accommodation available within the Centre will clearly be inadequate. At present, participants at the Stolac summer schools are housed with families in the town. This modality may continue to be pursued, but the preferred alternative would be to expand the potential accommodation available to the Centre in the following two ways.

Additional facilities around the town may be purchased over time, including a number of smaller derelict properties of importance to the historical character of the town. It is the small traditional stone houses and shops around the town which together give it its character. A very large number were damaged in the recent war and are being allowed to deteriorate further and in danger of being demolished rather than renovated, reconstructed, or redeveloped. This will have a major long term impact on the town, altering its unique character and preventing its redevelopment as a living centre of human and cultural activity. These units will then be renovated on an individual basis and used for a variety of purposes, such as additional accommodation or additional facilities for the purposes of the Centre, as the premises for initiatives or projects arising out of the work of the Centre (e.g. internet access for young people, an ecological organization), or for rental, whether at commercial rates or to start-up businesses specializing in traditional crafts and activities, etc. Depending on the scale of the purchases, some of these houses, as well as the accommodation at the main compound could be made available as short-term hostel accommodation, when not in use for the activities of the Centre. An area of particular interest in this regard would be the old Čaršija or market square in front of the main mosque. This area was previously lined with old stone shops and public buildings, including the old *kiraethana* or public reading room. It was a centre of commercial and public life and of traditional crafts, including leather working, book binding, metal working, and so forth. The entire area was razed to the ground during the recent war. There are plans to rebuild the area and it is of great importance to the town that this be done in a way that restores its earlier functions. Involvement of the Centre would ensure the presence of an honest broker in the process and increase the chances that it is carried out in a historically faithful and culturally sensitive way that restores life to the traditional heart of the town.

The other main additional facility which might be purchased is a larger plot of land outside the town for development as an outdoor facility for the organization of group activities, which could also be put at the disposal of other associations organizing summer camps for children, art camps, etc. The construction of hostel-style accommodation is envisaged in the longer term. Possible locations are close to the Illyrian citadel of Daorson, in the vicinity of the Radimlja stećci, both major heritage sites in their own right, which require protection and promotion. The presence of a hostel and camping site in their vicinity would ensure this.

As an important aspect of the proposal is the promotion of traditional crafts and traditional farmhouse produce, including jams, honey, cordials, dried herbs and teas, cheeses, etc., as well as wax candles, traditional soaps, scents, hand made paper, and similar products, there will be a need for premises in which the production of such products can be initiated, training provided to interested local farmers and small businesses, and the products themselves actually sold. A shop for showcasing the products will therefore need to be provided, possibly with a coffee shop and restaurant attached. This could also serve as an information centre for the distribution of heritage leaflets and maps and similar materials, as well as the arrangement of farmhouse accommodation and activities for tourists. An admirable location for such premises might be in a number of the renovated mills on the Bregava River, which are government (not municipal) property.

## **9. Staffing**

The initial full time staffing requirements for the project would be:

- A Project Manager,
- A Handyman, and
- A Housekeeper.

Staff for cleaning and catering would be engaged as needed.

Additional staffing would depend on the activities current at any given moment, though long term it is likely that two or three project officers would be needed to coordinate activities, engage with youth organizations locally, and manage commercial activities.

## **10. Potential partners and cooperative networks**

The partners for this project can be divided into a number of categories. Two of the most important are:

- (1) The International Forum Bosnia; and
- (2) Its network of partners in the area of civil society development, the promotion of religious and cultural tolerance and reconciliation.

This includes many organizations both within Bosnia and the region and abroad. Based on past experience, we expect particularly good cooperation with religious organizations from Bosnia and Herzegovina, including the Franciscan Province of Srebrena Bosna and the Franciscan Theological Seminary in Sarajevo. We similarly expect good cooperation with the various universities in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Dalmatia, particularly the Džemal Bijedić University of Mostar and the relevant faculties of the University of Sarajevo.

Local organizations already active in Stolac and the wider area, with whom the Centre expects to engage in a regular way include, but are not limited to the Association for the Rehabilitation of Civil Trust in Stolac and the Stolac Youth Forum. In this case, we will be building on links already forged by the International Youth Centre for Cultural Heritage.

## 11. Costs

The initial **set-up costs** relate to the purchase and development of the site for the Centre. This is expected to cost approximately 650,000 Euro. The breakdown is as follows:

<u>Purchase of the initial plot, legal fees, and clearing:</u>	already covered
<u>Renovation of the existing house, with stone roof, etc.:</u>	50,000 EUR
<u>Construction of the new building at approximately 1000KM per net sqm:</u>	370,000 EUR
<u>Outfitting and equipment of facilities (including library and kitchen):</u>	75,000 EUR
<u>Works on surrounding areas:</u>	75,000 EUR
<u>TOTAL:</u>	570,000 EUR

Approximate **operating costs** are estimated as follows:

<u>Annual salaries:</u>	50,000 EUR
<u>Running costs and maintenance:</u>	20,000 EUR
<u>Library and website costs (incl. wireless internet access):</u>	10,000 EUR
<u>Total (per year):</u>	80,000 EUR

The cost of activities and programmes will be surplus to this.

While the centre will generate some income from its activities and programmes, which may defray some of the operating costs, it will not cover them fully. Outside funds will be needed. Our preference is to create an endowment fund to cover basic costs as well as some programme activities. A total endowment of about 2 million Euros would be sufficient to provide for the future of the Centre. We will be approaching private donors and interested foundations about this.

## **12. Opinion and reactions on Project Proposal**

**Keith Doubt**

**Professor of Sociology at Wittenberg University**

“An excellent and compelling project. I would be glad to be involved and support in whatever ways you thought appropriate and beneficial.”

**Sonja Biserko**

**President of the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia**

“I fully support this project”.

**Kurt Anders Richardson**

**Professor of Theology at McMaster University**

“I thank you with all my heart for your invitation to join you in this great enterprise and I accept enthusiastically.”

**Prince Muhammad al Ghazi of Jordan**

“A very well prepared and very well thought-out proposal”.

**Norman Cigar**

**Research fellow at the Marine Corps University**

I wholeheartedly support your initiative. The proposal is comprehensive and the project represents a major contribution to the peace process in BiH. My congratulations and much success!!!

**Willem Houwen**

**Kosovo Institute of Journalism & Communication Head of School**

Congratulations on this excellent project proposal! KIJC fully supports your initiative. We deeply respect the inter-religious approach you take and we feel that it is complementary to the more secular approach our institute takes. You may have ideas yourself how we could also use your International House of Dialogue and Reconciliation for the complicated Kosovar context. Please let us work this out jointly!

**Ivo Banac**

**Professor of History at Yale University**

An excellent proposal. I look forward to participating actively in the project very soon.

**Dejan Kosanović**

**Documentary film director and film historian**

I read your proposal with great interest. I consider it an excellent proposal, of exactly the sort needed in our region right now. You can always count on my support and participation.

**Gareth Jones**

**Professor of Theology at Canterbury Christchurch University**

Many thanks indeed for your tremendous idea and document about the International House in Stolac. I am of course delighted and honoured to be asked to be involved and promise my support and commitment in every way that I can.

**Carole Hodge**

**Geopolitical and geo-strategic researcher**

Thank you for sending me details of your new project in Stolac. As we enter an era of increasing social fragmentation, and disillusionment with materialistic values, the underlying ethos of such a centre could attract considerable international interest, whilst also providing a venue for the communities in BiH to get together for a wide range of diverse activities. It is undoubtedly a mammoth undertaking, but an exciting one.

**Aleksandar Boskovic**

**Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Social Sciences in Belgrade (Serbia)**

I read with great interest your draft project proposal for the International House of Dialogue and Reconciliation in Stolac. Your project deals with a very important topic in a bold and timely manner. I would be very glad to help in any way that I can with the realization of this important project.

**Francis Jones**

**Poet and translator, Professor at the University of Newcastle**

This project is ambitious, inspired, and inspiring – not just for the future of Stolac and BiH, but for the wider world. In particular, I like the combination of local roots and global outlook. I wish you every success and look forward eagerly to hearing about developments.

**Florian Bieber**

**Political scientist, Lecturer at University of Kent**

I fully support the initiative, which I think is an excellent and wonderful idea.

**Fikret Čaušević,**

**Professor of Economics at Sarajevo University**

Congratulations on this project proposal. I fully support the effort and think it is the best way to support development in Bosnia and Herzegovina based on respect for our core cultural values.

**Hector Gullan**

**Lieutenant-Colonel, British Army**

I congratulate you on a magnificent project, which points directly to a vision of a Bosnia and Herzegovina with a harmonious and united society based on dialogue, respect for human rights, rule of law and democracy through the development of understanding as the basis for the restoration of trust across society. It was with great interest and admiration that I read your proposal to establish an institute for dialogue, reconciliation and social regeneration in Stolac, where the core traditional values of community life and individual quality of life are put centre stage based on the equality of human beings, the right to recognition, and respect for human dignity. Truth – based upon an acceptance throughout society to acknowledge and where appropriate shoulder a burden of responsibility for past wrongdoings, and reconciliation for past deeds – leading to real peace in the souls of innocent victims – can only be achieved by open, frank and honest dialogue. This proposed institute will go a very long way to facilitating this and to ensuring that the painful lessons of history do not repeat themselves again.

**Sheelah Hidden**

**PHD Research student of Political Science at the Free University, Berlin**

Thank you very much for this fascinating Project Proposal which I find to be extremely wide-ranging and visionary. I would be delighted to be involved in any capacity that could be of assistance to you.

**Merima Balavac**

**Post graduate student at University of Cardiff**

I read this project proposal with a great pleasure. I find it immensely important and would gladly help in its implementation. It is highly feasible and I am convinced that, once the start costs are covered, further functioning could be provided from its own revenues. What I find particularly interesting is the third purpose of the project. The strategic position of Stolac has not been

exploited as a tourist destination so far. Foreign tourists enter Bosnia mainly from Croatia, as there are cheap flights to Croatian sites only. If Stolac could offer something to the tourist, it could become an unavoidable stop on their trip.

**John Herlihy**

**Lecturer at several Near and Far Eastern Universities**

I have read the attachment that you forwarded to me with great interest. I am not that familiar with what is going on in that part of the world in terms of the social and political problems of the area, except for what I see in the international news. However, what you have proposed makes a lot of sense and as a Muslim, I think it is very important that this kind of dialogue and cooperation is initiated and sustained. Please let me know if I can be of any assistance for the furtherance of this project.

**Liam Hunt**

**Professor of history at St. Lawrence University**

I'm delighted to learn about this project, which I'd like to support any way I can. As you know, these are not good times financially in this country, so my resources are limited. But I can certainly contribute \$500 for a start.

**Haris Cerić**

**Lecturer at Faculty of Political Science, Sarajevo**

I support the idea. The project is well developed in all aspects. It would be pleasure for me to contribute to the project in the future.

**Michael Fitzgerald**

**Author, editor and publisher**

I am honoured to receive this information and I commend you on your efforts. When you are ready to publish this information World Wisdom will post a "news" item on our Internet site alerting readers to your proposal. This will include a link to your website. World Wisdom will donate to your library a copy of every book in our catalogue that you believe will be of interest to your visitors. I will look forward to watching your continued progress.

God speed. With my prayers,