

SYSTEMATIZING THE DATA FROM THE ARCA QUESTIONNAIRES FOR THE COUNTRY REPORTS

Adult Training and Education for International and Intra-national Interventions for Peace Building, Conflict Transformation, Mediation and Crisis Management

Country Report for Slovakia

August 2006

1. Introduction to Slovak Country Report

A Slovak country report is a document, which was written in the framework of situation and needs analysis in the field of Adult Training and Education for International and Intra-national Interventions for Peace Building, Conflict Transformation, Mediation and Crisis Management in each of the countries participating to the ARCA project.

Methodologically the basic instrument for gathering information was extensive questionnaire disseminated to organizations and institutions that were expected to be active (at least indirectly) in the defined field.

46 respondents were approached with the questionnaire. 6 of them are organizations providing regular trainings and they build their internal professional capacity in that sense. 10 to 20 of the overall number of approached respondents were expected to have programs involving adult training and education. Other part of respondents was expected to receive relatively regular training for their staff.

Vast majority of addressed organizations does not have conflict transformation and/or peacebuilding in their mission or primal focus. Just 3 organizations use explicit perspective of conflict transformation/resolution as the basic lenses for focusing their work (which of them one is partner to the ARCA project, second one is business company providing mediation services and the third one is Association of mediators). Other organizations define their identity through social development issues, community development, human rights, constitutional and other legal issues, ecology and sustainable development, education, support of civil society, capacity building of NGOs etc.

Besides very few exceptions none of the organization uses terminology connected to peace and they do not understand themselves as part of the peace movement. In Slovakia terminology of recent concepts of conflict transformation and peacebuilding is not well developed in Slovak language. The discourse about peace and conflict transformation is very weak if it exists at all. In last 17 years the concepts of civil society, non-governmental organizations, or advocacy have got much wider attention. Thus many organizations, even if they contribute significantly to building peace, they do not identify themselves explicitly with such agenda. This reason we consider to be one of the main reasons why **only 2 respondents out of 46 approached have filled in questionnaire**. That is why our report is built rather on observation and individual interviews with acknowledged Slovak trainers and practitioners who have general overview of the scene.

2. Organisational profile

We have to make basic distinctions and set some “borderlines” between various organizations connected to field of Adult Training and Education for International and

Intra-national Interventions for Peace Building, Conflict Transformation, Mediation and Crisis Management:

1. Organizations using “conflict transformation lenses” and “peace lenses” when considering their work or organizations that use other perspectives (that implicitly involve or influence justice, reconciliation, transformation of conflict etc.)
2. Organizations that focus primarily on adult training and education and organizations that use training just as a small part of their programs (usually outsourced)

Perspective of organizational mission

There is a number of organizations that contribute to building peace by adult training, nevertheless the vast majority of them does not use this perspective. Peace, peacework, or nonviolent conflict transformation as such have never formed a major theme for open discourse in Slovakia. It is true despite practical experience with non-violence through The Velvet revolution in 1989.

The general attitude toward non-violence is rather pragmatic and “instrumental”. It means that usually organizations speak about and teach practical methods and approaches of nonviolent conflict resolution without mentioning non-violence or even conflict explicitly. Often there are programs that implicitly work with conflicts, e.g.:

- Community development programs that involve techniques for citizen participation on public decision-making
- Programs that deal with relationships between majority and minority populations (especially Roma minority, Slovak – Hungarian relationship etc.)
- Human rights programs (gender issues, support of citizens and their rights)
- Environmental programs
- Development cooperation programs and development education programs
- Advocacy programs on various topics including also already mentioned fields etc.

In last four years mediation as a method has come closer to the centre of public attention. There was a new law on mediation adopted, which opens the door for use of mediation as an alternative mean to certain court decisions. It has opened the space for organizations that want to focus on mediation. In majority of cases these are lawyer’s offices and then usually individuals (social workers, psychologists) who provide services as individuals, not as firms. The law defines also educational criteria for becoming a mediator. These criteria shape trainings of mediators. However, there is just one company limited, according to our overview, which provides more or less regular courses on mediation.

Focus on adult training and education

Many organizations use trainings as part of their programs from time to time or for the purposes of their own capacity building. Then there is a limited number of organizations that serve as educational organizations and provide trainings. Usually they are NGOs, academic institutions, and business companies. In the field of our interest mostly NGOs are active with few exceptions created by rare university courses.

Funding

Funding is usually not explicitly dedicated to conflict transformation or peacework besides few exceptions (e.g. Program of official development assistance Slovak Aid in

last call for proposals in 2006 has asked for projects on conflict resolution education for Kyrgyzstan). Similarly to perspective used by particular NGOs, also donor perspectives usually do not involve conflict transformation and peacework explicitly.

After departure of North American private donors problems with funding advocacy activities occur (advocacy activities are often closely connected to issues relevant for building peace).

Nowadays major funding comes from public resources:

- State and local authorities: financing schools, programs working with youth etc.
- State: Program of official development assistance Slovak Aid
- European Commission: through various programs
- Foreign public donors: USAID, CIDA, DFID etc.

There are still some foreign private donors (e.g. G. Soros through his Open Society Foundation). Cooperation with local business companies is dynamically evolving; however, themes of peace and non-violence do not resonate very much.

Some educational organizations get certain part of their income through providing services to large international and/or intergovernmental organizations (UN, IOM,...).

3. Profile of the Training Programmes

Non-formal education

Ad hoc

Many trainings are provided on *ad hoc* basis, when there is temporary need in the organization. Often it happens when organization sends e.g. volunteers to election monitoring mission abroad. Such trainings are usually provided by organization, which is responsible for overall coordination of the mission (UN...). Part of organizations receives their training from their foreign partner organizations (e.g. Slovak non-governmental development organization closely cooperates with its Austrian counterpart, which provides basic training and builds a base of know-how in Slovak partner organization).

Long-term training of practitioners

In Slovakia there is a lack of longer-term programs that would prepare practitioners for intervening in conflicts. Probably in next years there will be growing pressure on creating programs for development practitioners. (Till now according to our overview there was just one long-term program focusing on development practice called The Development School for participants from Slovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania). The number of practitioners deployed by Slovak organizations each year is quite low but it has a strong increasing tendency.

More frequent exceptions among longer-term trainings are mediation courses that prepare mediators according to Slovak Law on mediation and long-term courses for consultants in non-governmental and public sector. These courses involve topics of conflict transformation and prepare participants for intervention.

In some of the cities in Southern and Eastern Slovakia Conciliation Commissions were established. They have received series of training focusing on conflict resolution in communities, civil society issues, working in multicultural environment etc.

Training as a part of other programs

Often training is a smaller part of rather big programs. In such cases trainings are similar to ad hoc trainings with very specific content and structure adapted to needs and limits of the program. E.g. in program dealing with majority-minority relations in mixed community with Roma minority a training is provided as a part of longer term process of cooperative planning in community.

There is a growing number of development education programs in some schools and organizations as well as environmental education programs and peer programs (e.g. peer mediation program in some schools).

Formal education

Some academic institutions are striving to introduce conflict transformation courses within their programs. E.g. some Departments of political sciences, European studies, Psychology etc. There are some programs that implicitly teach a lot of concepts applicable also in the field of conflict transformation and peacebuilding (e.g. post gradual studies for diplomats, or “misiology” focusing on practitioners who will work as lay missionaries). There are certain attempts to start courses on development at universities.

In general these courses are not sufficient for preparing practitioners able to intervene. They are largely theoretical and limited in their extent.

In schools there are attempts to create curricula for secondary schools on development issues. In regular curricula for primary and secondary schools there are certain peace education features included (esp. in lessons of Ethics and Civic education); however they are just theoretical and very short.

4. Conclusion

For parts 4.-8. there was not gathered relevant information since too few respondents have answered. From our experience we can conclude that there is no coherent practice of training programs explicitly focused on peacebuilding and conflict transformation.

However, there is a number of programs and organisations that focus on issues, which are very relevant also within a practice of peacebuilding and conflict transformation. Those programs and organizations do not use “peace lenses” and terms to define their practice. Introducing this perspective and opening a new discourse we consider to be important in Slovakia for at least two reasons:

1. Refreshing perspectives of existing programs, and
2. Good opportunity to introduce important aspects of conflict transformation and peacebuilding in closely related fields (e.g. development education), which are just taking their shape in Slovakia.

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