

Report:

Workshop on Mediation & Conflict Transformation in Namibia

- * Sharing skills & experiences
- * Generating ideas & future projects
- * Supporting the peaceful development of Namibia

15/16 March 2007

in

Windhoek, Namibia

Jan Ligthart Training Centre, Rossing Foundation

“Enhancing Peace through Capacity Building in non-violent Conflict Resolution”



Objectives:

The main objectives of the workshop were:

- to introduce Namibians from different cultural and professional backgrounds to each other who had participated in earlier workshops on mediation and conflict resolution,
- to deepen mediation and conflict resolution skills,
- to create a supporting environment for networking and future cooperation.

Motto:

“Our purpose is to create a functioning network of competent people in all regions, in key institutions, who are able and willing to deal with acute conflicts or crises, and who have already established functioning communication and logistical networks amongst them.”

Program:

Thursday, 15/03/2007

- 9.00 - 9.30 Arrival, registration, filling in ‘Competence Profiles’
- 9.30 - 10.00 Opening remarks
- present facilitators and special guests
 - introduce groups from different trainings
- 10.00 - 10.15 Overview of items and schedule for the two days
- 10.15 - 11.30 Group work with guiding questions (integrated coffee break)
- 11.30 - 12.00 Group presentations
- 12.00 - 12.30 Input: methods of analysing conflict
- 12.30 - 13.00 Introduction of open space method (concerns / intentions)
- 13.00 - 14.00 Lunch break
- 14.00 - 15.00 Clustering of concerns
- 15.00 - 16.30 Group work to specify concerns with guiding structure and facilitator
- 16.30 - 17.00 Groups present results of their group work in plenary

Friday, 16/03/2007

- 8.00 - 8.15 Arrival
- 8.15 - 10.00 Group exercises
- 10.00 - 10.30 Coffee break
- 10.30 - 11.00 Identify participants’ needs and wishes
- 11.00 - 13.00 Networking
- 13.00 - 14.00 Lunch break
- 14.00 - 15.00 Practise / Role-play Mediation
- 15.00 - 15.30 ‘Star evaluation’ & Feedback
- End

Participants:

About 40 people attended the workshop. Most of them had participated in training workshops and follow-up sessions, conducted by I ACT in 2005 and 2006. They work in different institutions and fields, as well as in various regions:

- Office of the Ombudsman
- University of Namibia - Department of Social Work
- Ministry of Health and Social Services
- PEACE Centre
- Legal Assistance Centre
- Paralegal Association of Namibia
- Waldorf School Windhoek

Other participants had attended slightly different trainings, organized / conducted by:

- PEACE-Centre: Alternatives to Violence Program – Training of Trainers by South African Phaphama Initiatives - Facilitators
- GTZ : 5-day Workshop: Conflict Management and Mediation – Assistance to Namibian Trainers by German I ACT - Facilitators
- InWent : 1-month course in Crisis Prevention in Germany for international Participants

Facilitators:

Facilitation:

- Prof. Dr. Angela Mickley, Professor for Peace Education, Conflict Resolution and Ecology at the Faculty of Social Sciences at Potsdam University of Applied Sciences
- Ms. Birgit Sinnwell-Wenzel, Lawyer and Mediator from Southern Germany

Assistance and Co-Facilitation:

- Ms. Julia Ortmann, Lawyer and Mediator in Munich, Germany
- Ms. Callista Nqula, Life Skills and English Tutor at CRIS in Windhoek, Namibia
- Mr. Peik Bruhns, Trainer and Consultant for Organisational Development in Namibia
- Mr. Benjamin Schernick, Local Co-ordinator of the I ACT – Project in Namibia

Process & Outcomes:

Day 1:

The participants exchanged their experiences with resolving conflicts cooperatively, first within their former training groups and then in the plenary. They also introduced themselves and their groups personally and professionally.

Afterwards they had the opportunity to raise issues they are concerned about and which they would like to see addressed during and after the workshop.

Important issues and questions raised by the participants (original quotations):

- “Who and how can the German-Ovaherero - Issue be solved?”
- “How to address the widening gap between rich and poor in Namibia?”
- “Namibia is divided along ethnic lines – more than before Independence”
- “Violence against women and children – Justice System is failing. Conflict between members of community and Law”
- “Namibia’s Silence on the Human Rights violations in Zimbabwe?”
- “How to deal with all negative feelings regarding Conflict, e.g. pain, disappointment?”
- “The so-called ‘Freedom of Expression’ – What happened?”
- “Fair Justice System?”
- “The Namibian Education”
- “Way forward for Social Services”
- “Understanding and Respect in Education”
- “Deteriorating education standard in Namibia”
- “How to address corruption as a social worker?”
- “Social Workers at the Ministry of Health and Social Services: What will they do after April 2007?”
- “How one can assert oneself, when dealing with politicians and/or people in high ranking positions?”
- “Why do we have more social workers than psychologists?”
- “How can one deal with people who do not understand your professional work?”
- “Prejudices against (private/government) schools – How could we find a solution?”

During the afternoon session, these issues were clustered and then discussed in small groups supported by facilitators. The focus was not to discuss the issues content-wise, but to analyse the situation and its implications for the micro-, meso- and macro-levels of society and politics and identify necessary tools, methods and approaches towards a possible solution in the future. The working groups shared their results in the plenary.

Day 2:

The second day started with teambuilding exercises, skills training for mediation processes and multi-cultural singing. Thereafter, the participants identified the areas they would like to work and focus on: networking and a role-played mediation process:

Networking

Participants located themselves in the regions they are working in, on an imaginary map of Namibia. They presented themselves, their fields of work and present cooperation partners and with which people or institutions they would like to cooperate and network in the future.

The list of participants was copied and distributed so that contact details are available and people can keep in touch.

In addition electronic networking via E-mail will be initiated by Peik Bruhns.

Mediation

Sociometric exercises were used to visualize which fields of mediation (family, school, community or workplace) the participants are already active in.

An exemplary mediation scenario was chosen by the participants, in which pupils from a private and a government school had ended up fighting due to prejudices about the educational quality of their respective schools.

Some of the issues at stake:

- Name calling, beating, general and specific prejudices
- Assumptions of teachers' and parents' negative/escalating input
- Media image: fear of negative & wanting a positive
- Inferiority and superiority complex

All people present knew about this type of conflict and could easily identify with one or other of the views described by the problem owners.

In the role-played mediation, the pupils, their parents, teachers, school-board members, social workers in the community and psychologists were present, altogether 16 conflict actors in specific roles. The co-mediator who volunteered to lead proceedings with Angela Mickley was a member of the Legal Assistance Centre and Paralegal Association of Namibia.

The other participants took observer tasks for the different people and phases in the process.

During the very heated beginning of the mediation process it became obvious that the fight between the pupils was just the tip of the iceberg. The mediators allowed an open voicing of concerns, feelings and issues by the (role-play) conflicting parties to provide them with a complete and differentiated image of their conflict and their controversial or overlapping interests. There were a number of differing and outright controversial concepts about the education system, the quality of schools and teachers, the attitude of people of different cultures and the tolerance towards use of drugs among young people.

It became apparent, that the wider communities had been involved in the genesis of the mediated conflict and could now play an important role in its solution.

Supported by the two mediators, the conflicting parties elaborated which efforts need to be taken to improve not only a constructive learning environment, but also to pro-actively face the existing prejudices on either side.

Finally, and fortunately within the time limit of the workshop, they succeeded in generating options to put this into practice. The very precise and detailed questions asked after this show-mediation with apparently very real feelings, focused on:

- attitude of the mediators,
- methods of de-escalation within the setting,
- reframing insulting language of clients,
- working with strong emotions in the presence of the respective opponents,
- allowing a wide range of controversial opinions being voiced,
- controlling the process throughout,
- giving different amount of space to the clients.

In the final evaluation and during the workshop the participants gave feedback.

Exemplary quotes:

- “Good Networking”*
- “I became more aware of certain issues”*
- “I learnt to make a presentation”*
- “I felt safe in the small group and less safe in plenary”*
- “Helpful to hear, that others have the same concerns”*
- “Platform for us Namibians”*
- “It was very informative”*

Now, with everybody being back at their workplaces, the next step would be to keep in touch when necessary.

The facilitators announced that the pilot-course of a comprehensive 9-months training in Mediation and Conflict Transformation is about to begin towards the end of 2007. Some of those who attended the workshop could be identified as possible participants and showed great interest in becoming professional mediator.

Conclusion:

The objective of bringing former participants together to network has obviously been reached.

This means that a horizontal dimension has been successfully added to the existing vertical one, where German experts came into the country and conducted trainings.

There is a growing number of keen and talented learners and experts in this innovative field of conflict resolution who can practise mediation in their social and professional areas and are able to draw on outside expertise when needed.

Once a complete training has been established in Namibia and will be run and staffed by Namibians, the German contribution can be reduced to coaching, consulting and assisting in highly escalated or complex conflicts.

The needs mentioned by workshop participants included:

- Intervention and coaching for their beginning professional activities in mediation
- Regular exchange of experiences and further learning steps
- Further intense training of personal competences in this field
- Access to consulting service or individual persons for help in problem situations
- Practising and experimenting under supervision for more effective reflection of processes
- Widen the use of conflict resolution and mediation in society (‘implementing conflict resolution at a household-level’), especially in politics and institutions (conflicting issues: channels of communication and existing structures)

The results of the past trainings and application of the new methods in the field were, among others:

- Improved professionalism
- Use of mediation and single elements in family, work and community
- Positive changes in some people’s value systems
- Greater ability to control escalating conflicts in private and professional sphere
- Growing wish to see conflict resolution applied in political life

Appendix:

Impressions from the Workshop:

Day 1: Reading Resources & Participants' Profiles for Networking



Day 1: Working Groups



'Competence Profiles'



*“Enhancing Peace through
Capacity Building in non-violent Conflict Resolution”*

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...please fill in immediately and return page to facilitators before 9.30 am. Thank You.

My personal profile as resource in CR and Mediation:

Name

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Age

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Institution

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Training/Profession

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Experience in CR/Mediation

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Offered Competencies:

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Fields and types of conflict (e.g. family, community, labour, land, workplace):

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Regions

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Languages

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Availability

.....

.....

'Guiding Questions'



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Day 1: Guiding Questions for exchange in former training groups

...to be used for developing perspectives in group work:

- What have we done as persons and as institutions?
- What has worked well and where did we use it?
- What was challenging and where did I encounter this?
- Where do I identify further needs in methods, practice or input?
- Which impulse did I get and pursue?
- What did I change in my behaviour, approach or process?

Please present a concise version (appr. 3 minutes) of the outcomes of your deliberations and answers in the forum.

You can also use the forum for perhaps one of you to present a singular experience.