

Workshop
Elaboration of an inclusive and participatory dialogue process
in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Upper Karabakh



Project Proposal

September 2012

1. Introduction

The Caucasus Region, located between the three big powers Turkey, Iran, and Russia, is characterized by numerous tensions and conflicts at a national and an international level. In the South Caucasus Region, the concentration of conflicts is extremely high – some of them have existed for a long time and are known as “frozen” conflicts. However, they have become more polarized in the recent years and the escalation risk has been growing which leaves only little hope for a peaceful settlement in the near future¹. Indeed, unhelpful and mutually exclusive positions are currently being reinforced.

The Upper Karabakh conflict² is a “frozen” conflict: Since 1994, when Armenia and Azerbaijan ended their war with a ceasefire, the situation has not changed. The status of the Upper Karabakh is still not defined, the borders between the countries not agreed upon, and about one million people still live as Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in their own countries. For 20 years, mediation efforts of the OSCE-Minsk-Group have been taking place without significantly improving the situation. Kaufmann³ sees four main reasons for this stagnation: insufficient and inadequate representation of the conflict parties, blockades due to geopolitical interests, the fact that negotiations in the Upper Karabakh conflict were closed to the public, as well as the unwillingness to compromise in both societies. Also, both governments lack coherent and sustainable strategies for non-violent conflict transformation.

Mediation efforts took primarily place on track 1-level⁴, while track 2- and track 3-levels were disregarded and there were no efforts to bring these levels together. Reasons for this can be seen in the semi-authoritarian regimes, deficits in resources and the patriarchal mentality in the South Caucasian societies⁵. Lederach⁶ was among the first who pointed out the importance of including all tracks in peacebuilding efforts and to foster dialogue not only between the conflict parties, but also within the parties between the different tracks.

Gahramanova identifies several promising entry points for activities in conflict transformation and peacebuilding in the South Caucasus, such as alliances across the levels of society – especially between politics and civil society, youth, public debate and public awareness, bilateral and multilateral projects

¹ JOBELIUS Matthias (2009). Internationale Politikanalyse: Länderanalyse Südkaukasus: Krise und Kriegsgefahr? Friedrich Ebert Stiftung.

² The term Upper Karabakh is used in order to avoid opening the status question regarding Nagorno Karabakh and rather stands for “engagement without recognition” as favored by the European Parliament (see CR 2012).

³ KAUFMANN Walter (2007). Die Rolle von Nichtregierungsorganisationen bei der Bearbeitung von Konflikten im Südkaukasus. VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.

⁴ John Paul Lederach distinguishes in his well-known model between different intervention levels. Track 1 refers to the official international diplomacy and government agencies, where political and military leaders operate. Track 2 refers to mid-level civil society leaders (religious, business, media, academic) and track 3 to the community level leaders (grassroots).

⁵ GAHRAMANOVA Aytan (2007). Peace Strategies in „frozen“ ethno-territorial conflicts: integrating reconciliation into conflict. University of Mannheim.

⁶ LEDERACH, John Paul (1997). Building Peace: Conflict Transformation across Cultures. United States Institute of Peace.

among others. Mirimanova⁷ and Svensson⁸ discuss lessons learned, challenges and recommendations for future dialogue processes in the South Caucasus. Recently, Conciliation Resources⁹ published a discussion paper on possible entry points for further dialogues in the region. All studies emphasize the importance of inclusive approaches, as the social groups most affected, have been the least included in high-level mediation processes to date. For these reasons, our project's main focus is directed to a comprehensive, inclusive and innovative approach to establish an intergroup dialogue process, embracing all groups of society¹⁰.

ICP's Previous Activities in Azerbaijan

In June 2011 ICP successfully organized and accomplished a two-week summer school on the topic of „Transition from Conflict to Peace and Non-Violence” in Baku upon request from local youth leaders. This engagement led to several meetings and ongoing contacts with representatives of embassies, government, universities and local NGOs engaged in democratization, conflict transformation and peacebuilding. Thereby, various voices emphasized the need for a dialogue process which includes all societal levels. Second, new committed key actors need to be included at track 1-level in order to bring new ideas into the discussion. Third, the impact of this process can be multiplied by initiating a similar process in Armenia, Azerbaijan and the Upper Karabakh (Armenian and Azeri communities).

2. Vision & main objectives

Recognizing the failures and obstacles of previous peace initiatives mentioned above and believing that a sustainable solution for the region must be supported from all levels; the main goal of the project is to establish internal dialogue processes in Armenia, Azerbaijan, as well as within the Upper Karabakh communities (Armenian and Azeri communities). The aims of these dialogue processes is (a) to broaden the sense of ownership in civil society; (b) to strengthen civil society engagement in the peacebuilding process; (c) to establish a framework where new and innovative ideas and inputs can be discussed in a confidential setting; (d) to develop an interregional strategy and cooperation; and (e) to introduce innovative peacebuilding approaches. The visionary and long-term goal is to bring together the participants of the three area's' internal dialogue processes (aimed at taking place in parallel) in order to establish a regional dialogue, including participants from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Upper Karabakh in cooperation with several European countries.

⁷ MIRIMANOVA, Natalia (2009). Mediation and Dialogue: Official and Unofficial Strands. Case Study: Lessons from South Caucasus. IFP Mediation Cluster.

⁸ SVENSSON, Isak (2009). The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict. Lessons from the mediation efforts. IPF Mediation Cluster.

⁹ Conciliation Resources (2012): Beyond exclusion: rethinking approaches to status in the Nagorny Karabakh peace process. Discussion Paper February 2012.

¹⁰ Being aware that reaching and include all groups is impossible, we consider and carefully choose important and well networked key actors. Dialogue is based on the assumptions that the whole society or conflicts is represented in the room independent of the amount of participants or persons itself.

3. Specific Objectives & Activities

3.1 Mapping of existing peacebuilding activities and research in Azerbaijan, Upper Karabakh and Armenia (Desk Study)

Taking into account that a comprehensive conflict analysis and a review of the past mediation and peacebuilding activities are missing, a mapping of actors, existing projects and initiatives in conflict transformation and peacebuilding in the South Caucasus is elaborated in a first phase. Additionally, based on a desk-study, a short conflict analysis will be prepared by ICP in order to get an overview over the conflict issues, causes, actors and dynamics. Based on these desk studies, (a) gaps in past peacebuilding activities and (b) relevant actors for cooperation can be defined.

3.2 Reaching out to stakeholders engaged in Upper Karabakh Dialogue processes

An ongoing exchange with key actors of current and past dialogue processes will be established, as well as with NGOs, think tanks, governmental organizations, and parliamentarians with a focus on the South Caucasus, in order to ensure synergies and avoid overlaps.

3.3 Interactive workshop for the elaboration of an inclusive and participatory dialogue process

A 3-day workshop will be held in Tbilisi (Georgia) in order to bring together two representatives of each societal track of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Upper Karabakh (Armenian and Azerbaijani community) (15-30 persons). The workshop is organized in an interactive way to corporately (a) analyze gaps in past peacebuilding activities, (b) define entry points for successful peacebuilding activities, and (c) elaborate a three-year action plan to establish and maintain a dialogue process including all levels of societies of the participating countries.

The participants invited to the workshop will have a key role in the dialogue process implemented on basis of the action plan elaborated within these days. Therefore, they must have proven to be strongly engaged, well-networked, motivated, and creative regarding their involvement in the Upper Karabakh conflict or within their own societies.

The intended content of the workshop includes:

- Input "Gaps in past peacebuilding activities & promising entry points" using force field analysis¹¹
- Input "Successful dialogue processes & alternative peacebuilding activities"
- Creation of a common vision, elaboration and specification of main goals / topics of the dialogue process within the next three years
- Embedding the dialogue process in a broader context / relating the dialogue process to other concrete projects in conflict transformation
- Defining concrete activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts of the dialogue process

¹¹ Force field analysis provides a framework for looking at the factors that influence a situation, which are either driving movement toward a goal or blocking movement toward a goal. The force field is very dynamic, changing with time and experience.

- Defining the method of the dialogue process (selection of participants, etc.)
- Analyzing available human and financial resources for local implementation of the three year plan
- Defining methods for evaluation, monitoring and follow-up

The workshop methodology will be a mix of prescriptive and elicitive elements to provide the participants knowledge on best practices and lessons learned in a first phase of the workshop. In a second phase, the role of the trainer is to facilitate the elaboration of a strategic framework of a dialogue process as well as a concrete action plan. Methods fostering creativity will be crucial.

3.4 Three-year action plan

The content of the three-year action plan depends on the output of the workshop, which will be corporately elaborated by its participants in order to ensure local ownership. To not repeat the same mistakes as in the past, it will be based on the desk study conducted beforehand, a profound analysis and identification of gaps in past activities, promising entry points, as well as the discussion of lessons learned in past dialogue projects. The action plan will define benchmarks regarding aims to achieve by a certain time in order to be able to move a step further. For example, “at least 2 internal dialogue workshops have been realized at the community level within each of the four key communities (Armenia, Azerbaijan, the Karabakh Armenians and the Karabakh Azeris) by [date]”.

Experience shows that the following indicators are crucial for successful dialogue projects: inclusiveness of the process in the design phase of the dialogue, an understanding of the power dynamics, national ownership, transparency and the creation of a feeling of trust, inclusiveness and accountability, sufficient administrative and budgetary support and a strong follow-up mechanism.¹² The visibility of international support can on one hand act as a powerful force to advance a dialogue process, but on the other hand also create a sense of external imposition.

Beforehand, a set of quantitative and qualitative indicators (to measure whether the approach is really inclusive and participatory) will be determined in order to monitor the implementation of the action plan.

4. Risks & Opportunities

Choosing an inclusive and participatory approach is both an opportunity and a challenge. Consent exists, that a sustainable solution can only be found when all stakeholder groups are included. However, supporting levels of society that are currently not included in major decision processes can lead to a shift in power relations within the country. This in turn can provoke reluctance within the ruling class of society to cooperate in such a process.

¹² Peacebuilding Commission Working Group on Lessons Learned (2009). Lessons Learned from National Dialogue In Post-Conflict Situations. Concept Note presented on 14th October 2009.

The selection of the participants is crucial for successfully establishing a dialogue process. Participants need to be able and willing to engage for changes within their societies and have some kind of influence. Therefore, a selection method will be carefully elaborated based on the actor mapping.

Generally, the risks of a dialogue project are the lack of funding, as the impact depends on a long-term engagement, as well as the fatigue of the participants or the escalation of violence. Therefore it is important to let the parties involved define an optimal time frame, to empower them to navigate in a changing conflict environment, and to relate the dialogue process to concrete conflict transformation projects. Dialogue processes are generally slow in adapting to the changing environment that is why a repeating conflict analysis will be conducted with the participants of the dialogue process.

5. Activities: Time Schedule 2012 / 2013

2012: Societal Dialogue

| | |
|----------|---|
| 2012 | Mapping of the conflict and relevant peacebuilding actors and activities (desk study, Berne, Switzerland) - Mapping of local, national, regional and international peacebuilding initiatives in Azerbaijan, Armenia and Upper Karabakh - Conflict Analysis of the Upper Karabakh conflict |
| 2012 | Workshop: Elaboration of an inclusive and participatory dialogue process (5 days) - Selected participants (15-20) representing equally Armenia, Azerbaijan, as well as the Armenian and Azeri communities from Upper Karabakh, and the three societal tracks in each community, meet to jointly elaborate an inclusive and participative framework for a dialogue process |
| Dec 2012 | Action Plan for an inclusive and participatory dialogue process in the South Caucasus - Based on the discussions and decisions in the workshop a three-year action plan for the dialogue process is formulated |

2013 – 2015 Dialogue process (proposed process, concrete process elaborated based on the action plan)

| | |
|------------|---|
| March 2013 | 1st Societal Dialogue (each track separated) -> 12 dialogues |
| Sep 2013 | 2nd Societal Dialogue (each track separated) -> 12 dialogues |
| March 2014 | 3rd Societal Dialogue (each track separated) -> 12 dialogues |
| Sep 2014 | 4th Societal Dialogue (each community separated) -> 4 dialogues |
| March 2015 | 5th Societal Dialogue (each community separated) -> 4 dialogues |
| Sep 2015 | 6th Societal Dialogue (each community separated) -> 4 dialogues |
| Dec 2015 | 1st Regional Dialogue |

6. Logical Framework

| Logical Framework (DRAFT) | | | |
|---|--|---|--|
| Intervention Logic | Indicators | Sources of Verification | Assumptions |
| Overall Objective | | | |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sense of ownership in civil society is broadened 2. A framework for an inclusive and participatory peacebuilding strategy is established 3. Civil society's engagement is strengthened | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Dialogue process includes representatives of all relevant stakeholder groups (inclusive) b) Participants feel responsible for a peaceful transformation of the Upper Karabakh conflict c) Participants engage conjointly in the implementation of the action plan (participative) | Workshop documentation in audio-visual and written formats. Media coverage. Others: To be defined with the participants of the first workshop. | The fragile truce will not enter into a full blown war between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Governments and senior stakeholders in the region do allow people to participate in dialogue activities. Participants to dialogue activities will not suffer serious repercussions as a result of participating in the project. |
| Specific Objectives | | | |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Analysis of past peacebuilding activities 2. Definition of entry points 3. Elaboration of a inclusive and participative three-year action plan -> joint strategy | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) 1-2 key actor of each society and track is selected and participates in the workshop 1. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Actors mapping / Conflict mapping - Action plan - Documentation of the workshop - Evaluation of the workshop | |

7. Methodology

The term dialogue is used to describe very distinct settings, such as talks, debates and conferences. Therefore it is of great importance to clarify our understanding of dialogue. Dialogue fora can help people to understand one another across profound differences, strengthen people's relationships and community ties; they can help clarify people's feelings, concerns, and views, and find effective ways to respond to critically important problems, while keeping their own values. Carefully facilitated dialogues can enable people to talk with each other in ways that would otherwise not be possible. Requirements are respectful listening and collective discussion, rather than argument and debate. In conflict transformation, dialogues have been a valuable tool to foster joint action especially regarding future practical projects and negotiations¹³.

Participants

Experience shows that the choice of the initial protagonists is crucial. A mixture of moderate and well networked mainstream people involved at the beginning of the project is suggested. But others shall be included in the medium term of the project. The desk-study, conducted in the primary stage of the project, will be an important tool in the selection process of the candidates for the first meeting. The participants for the dialogue process will be chosen jointly.

Facilitation

The process will be facilitated by international and local facilitators. The working language will be English and Russian, but if necessary, translation will be provided into local languages in order to include all groups of society. Experience suggests the use of a broad mix of intervention methods.

The facilitation of the group meetings and dialogue fora are organized based on the following principles, among others:

- Comprehensiveness ("Bring the whole system in the room")
- Creativity
- Compassion
- Process-orientation
- Self-responsibility and self-organization of the group
- Collective intelligence
- Focus on the common ground, the future, and on resource

Different methods, such as Appreciative Inquiry, Dialogue, Open Space and others will be used to build relationships, trust and mutual interest among participants. They help to enhance creativity, share knowledge, innovation and a shared vision.

¹³ Norbert, Robers (2004). From resolution to transformation: the role of dialogue projects. Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management.

8. Organization

Institute for Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding (ICP), Switzerland

Project Coordination

The Institute for Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding (ICP) is an independent and non-partisan non-governmental organization based in Switzerland. We are engaged in conflict transformation and peacebuilding in the public and private sector.

We offer services in the following fields:

- Conflict Transformation and Dialogue Facilitation
- Training and Education
- Research and Teaching
- Awareness Raising and Public Relations

Responsibility: Dialogue process in Azerbaijan

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CSSProject for Integrative Mediation, Germany

Partner Organization

CSSProject for Integrative Mediation is a registered non-profit association in Berlin, Germany. It was originally founded in 2005 to draw lessons from the ten years work of the International Mediator in Bosnia and Herzegovina Prof. Dr. Schwarz-Schilling (1995-2004). Out of our experiences, we have developed a systemic approach to assisting people or communities in conflict. The organization has also trained several hundred persons in inter-community mediation and has worked with local leaders in over 20 divided communities.

Responsibility: Dialogue process in Armenia

Contact

CSSProject for Integrative Mediation

Schiffbauerdamm 15

10117 Berlin

Conciliation Resources, United Kingdom (to be confirmed)

Partner Organization

Conciliation Resources supports people at the heart of conflicts who are striving to find solutions. We work with them to deepen our collective understanding of the conflict, bring together divided communities and create opportunities for them to resolve their differences peacefully.

We are there for as long as we're needed to provide advice, support and practical resources.

Responsibility: Dialogue process in Upper Karabakh

Contact

Conciliation Resources

173 Upper Street

London N1 1RG

Strategic Research Center under the Azerbaijan President (SAM)

Partner Organization

As a research and policy recommending institution dedicated to innovative studies on national, regional and international issues, Center for Strategic Studies under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan (known by the acronym SAM in the Azerbaijani language) provides an intellectual forum for international dialogue in order to bring different views together and thereby contributing towards the formation of a common ground. The mission of SAM is to promote collaborative research, enhance the strategic debate and provide decision-makers with high-quality analysis and innovative proposals for action.

Contact:

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Analytical Centre on Globalisation and Regional Cooperation (ACGRC)

Partner Organization

Established in 2002, ACGRC works as both a think-tank and an advocacy group, aiming to promotion of democratic values, strengthening of civil society and the rule of law in Armenia, development of free market economy, regional integration and peaceful resolution of regional conflicts. ACGRC supports public sector reforms and development of good practices in local governance, disseminates knowledge on legal issues, produces expert assessments and analysis of conflict transformation and regional cooperation issues, and supports initiatives that aim towards forming an atmosphere of trust and stable peace in the South Caucasus.

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