



## PROGRAMMING

### SUMMARY:

*This interview was conducted with staff from CARE Bosnia. Conflict resolution has been used extensively with young people in that country. For a cross cultural analysis on CR work, please consult the CAP Youth Manual.*



# 13. CONFLICT RESOLUTION TRAINING

## A PROGRAM WITH YOUTH IN BOSNIA

### SASA:

We are doing conflict resolution (CR) training because of the nature of the war that took place here in the early 1990s. It was an ethnic war and so now we are working in three ethnic areas with Croatians, Muslims and Serbs. We're doing CR training to help groups overcome prejudice and national hate against each other.

The conflict resolution training is a kind of a first step in working with these different groups. It is an important foundation to promote good relations especially if you want to do networking or joint projects.

In this training we want to help them realize that what has happened has happened, that it is over and that they need to try to forget it and to focus on their future. We want them to see that they will have a better future is if they work together on the restoration of the country. We also want them to understand the influences from their environment (their parents or the community) and to think for themselves in a positive way.

The training is also to give them skills for resolving conflict. They learn techniques on how to deal with conflict in a straightforward way of how to discuss it and to try to resolve it. In doing this sometimes we refer to the ethnic conflict but it also refers to relationships amongst people or conflict within a youth organization.

### Q. How is the conflict resolution training organized?

A. Usually there are about 15 people. It is an interactive workshop where youth talk about their problems, put that on the table. We often have a workshop with different ethnic groups so the facilitators ask some very tricky questions about ethnicity. This gets the group participating as they start to discuss these complex situations and begin to understand what is going on with other nationalities.

### Q. What do you see as the main benefits of CR training?

A. In our case, we see benefits at both the personal and community level. Partly this is because of the nature of our conflict, an ethnic conflict. We find that youth who have received this training can work more effectively with other people.

For example, a big issue at this moment is the question of the returnees – of people returning to their hometowns and villages. Youth who have had conflict resolution training are more open to supporting the return of ethnic minorities into the community. Of course, this is a complex issue. It is a bit difficult at the level of authorities or politicians and this can influence people's views.

We find that youth who have had CR training, will be more open and have their own view on this, a different view from that of some of the

politicians. And some of these youth are taking an active role in trying to resolve these questions in a positive way.

**Q. *Is conflict resolution training popular with youth?***

**A.** Yes and it has grown so that now we are working with mixed ethnic groups. I remember two years ago the training team was working with a mixed ethnic group. It was a three-day training. The first-day was very difficult because they were discussing what happened during the war. Every ethnic group had to have a different story, a different view on the past and they felt very defensive. Each group wanted people to understand how hard it had been for them. So it was tense. But by the third day they were comparing their experiences during the war in a different way, one of learning rather than competing.

**Q. *What happened to change that dynamic?***

**A.** You have to realize that it is not common to have discussions amongst youth from different nationalities. So at the beginning they felt very depressed. But as they realized that other nationalities had also suffered, it made them feel less badly about their situation and also less defensive. This helped them to think that they should look into the future and let the past go away.