



Center for Management of Conflicts
str. Borka Talevski 11/4
tel/fax. +389 2 55 11 3 99
1000 Skopje, R. Macedonia
www.tcmc.org.mk ✉ info@tcmc.org.mk

Study Visit of DRC Team to Macedonia

09-25 September 2011

Implementing partner: Training center for Management of conflicts (TCMC)

Donor: Danish refugee Council (DRC) Gali Office

Contact person: Albert Hani

Context

Realizing that the region of Caucasus has a lot in common with the Balkan region, The Danish Refugee Council (DRC) from Gali and Training center for Management of conflicts (TCMC), considered that connection of the two regions can lead to very fruitful experience sharing exercise. During the last 20 years, International community has been focused a lot in the region of Balkans. They have invested a lot in to building up the capacities of the state and of the civil society. Although in a very unlucky situation, full with wars and violent conflicts, a very good expertise is created in the region of Balkans. Therefore experience sharing projects within the Balkan region as well as with the other similar regions in the world are encouraged by everybody.

Political, social as well as cultural context of the Caucasus region has a lot of similarities. Both the Balkan and Caucasus region can learn a lot from each other. Macedonia is a small fragile, ex-Yugoslavian country that was affected by the wars in Balkans. In 2011 there was a violent conflict among the two major communities in Macedonia (Ethnic Macedonians and Albanians). The conflict stopped with a peace accord known as The Ohrid framework agreement (OFA). Since the end of conflict in September 2011, Macedonia struggles in road to democracy by giving a lot of effort in new political, social, economical and cultural reforms. Nowadays OFA as such presents a model for consensus in society. Many countries refer to it and many adapt its principles and mechanisms in accordance to their needs.

Seeing this close link to Caucasus region or more specifically to Georgia and Abkhazia with Macedonia, DRC team reinforced the links and gave effort in introducing new successful Macedonian projects in Abkhazia. That is how The Youth Leadership Program (YLP) introduced in Abkhazia. Since its start and focus of energy within the youth of Abkhazia, the new potential young leaders are identified. In them DRC invested new knowledge and skills. They from now show impressive results that took longer time to see in Macedonia. Implementing Two trainings, one summer camp and numerous of small workshops at the schools as well as meetings with the school representative, led to the idea to bring the DRC team to Macedonia in order to gain more technical and operative skills in leading youth projects such is the YLP.

Aim

To build capacities among the DRC staff in the field of implementing Youth projects by having the opportunity to learn from the Macedonian experience.

Flow of the events

Preparation

Concerning the study trip to Macedonia a long preparatory phase took place in both the DRC and TCMC office. At the beginning of the initiative there has been a lot of discussion on the needs of the DRC team and the issues that the Macedonian experience could respond. Following these needs assessment meeting DRC team together with TCMC came to the first draft agenda. The main criteria for drafting the agenda were:

- to ensure visits of the institutions that have experience in working with youth,
- to ensure that a training module is incorporated within the program, and
- to ensure that participants have opportunity to discover themselves the cultural context of the country.

In the proposed agenda TCMC had proposed mixture of the three criteria's that were previously discussed.

- A) The **visits** of the DRC groups were focused in providing fast input to their knowledge by experience of the other state and non-state organizations in Macedonia. TCMC has focused in making a mixture of type of visits, therefore it proposed to visit firstly government institutions, than the main Civil society organizations that run the most successful youth projects in Macedonia, Local Municipality representatives, as well as Schools that support mostly youth projects. All of these meetings took place as it was planed at the draft program, with slight changes of the initially planed organizations. The visits happened also across Macedonia, trying to show to the group as many as possible organizations in different cities, because the political and cultural context is differing from a city to a city. By that TCMC wanted the group to draw out the best messages that could be applicable for the group in their surrounding. Most of the visits Happened in Western part of Macedonia. This is a region that is mostly diverse and represents a spot of knowledge for intercultural learning. The group had a chance to see cities such are: Kumanovo, Skopje, Tetovo, Struga, Ohrid, Kicevo and Bitola.
- B) The **training modules** that TCMC together with DRC had envisaged for this study trip were: Intercultural learning, Youth in Europe, Peacebuilding and conflict management tools,

Youth mobilization, The European Youth in action program and many other sub topics were part of the training module that TCMC had designed for the visiting group. These training modules were implemented in five days by five experienced youth workers that the Youth leadership program of TCMC had produced through out their working experience from 2001. Nowadays many of them have formed their own NGOs or are part of state apparatus.

- C) **Socio – cultural part** of the study trip was one of the most liked by the group. The DRC team had opportunity to visit some of the most visited places in Macedonia from cultural aspect. In this part of the Program TCMC took care that there is a balance of visits of cultural monuments that are related to religion and ethnicity. Therefore the group had a chance to see museums, churches, mosques etc. All of the places visited, were transferring messages of inter-culturalisem. Without any word, this part of the study trip became the most learning experience for the group.

The agenda was reflecting the needs of the group and was flexible enough to provide time and space for personal reflection after each activity.

TCMC had involved its staff members and the staff members of its main partner organization Forum ZFD in to the process of implementation of this project. They were also part of the study trip and visits, but they were also helping in logistical aspects of the program.

Logistics

One of the most important parts of the study trip was to ensure all logistical aspects that are related to **accommodation, food** and **transport** of the participants.

Concerning the transport of the group, at the beginning we had technical difficulties in ensuring Visa to enter Macedonia for the whole group. Because of this reason the initial agreed dates of implementation of this project were postponed. In an intensified process of communication with the Embassy representatives of Macedonia in Istanbul, we have been successful in providing on time the necessary travel documents for all five participants. Participants arrived on the 9th of September 2011 and on the very next day we have immediately started a orientation program at the TCMC and Forum-zfd office in Skopje.

Local transport was organized for the participants. For this purposes the private cars were used as well as taxi and bus in some occasions.

The **accommodation and food** was provided on time to all participants. They were hosted at very nice and fairly cheap hotels in Skopje but also in Struga. Their main residence place during the stay in Macedonia was in Struga. The hotel in Struga had all necessary facilities for accommodation, food and training rooms as well as training equipment.

Finances

In terms of finances, the planed budget although very tightened, was very realistic and it reflected the needs of the project. TCMC had no difficulties in the process of implementation of the project that could raise due to financial obstacles. We heave received on time the transfer of the money and we expect that we get the balance up to the expenditures and planed budget, as soon as this report is approved.