

TACSO BiH Technical Assistance to Network for Building Peace

Process of strategic planning for Network for Building Peace 28. – 30.3.2012., Hotel Bosnia, Sarajevo

REPORT

TA- STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS, March 28-30, 2012

Network for Building Peace approached TACSO project in BiH in order to get support in delivering Strategic planning for Network for Building Peace.

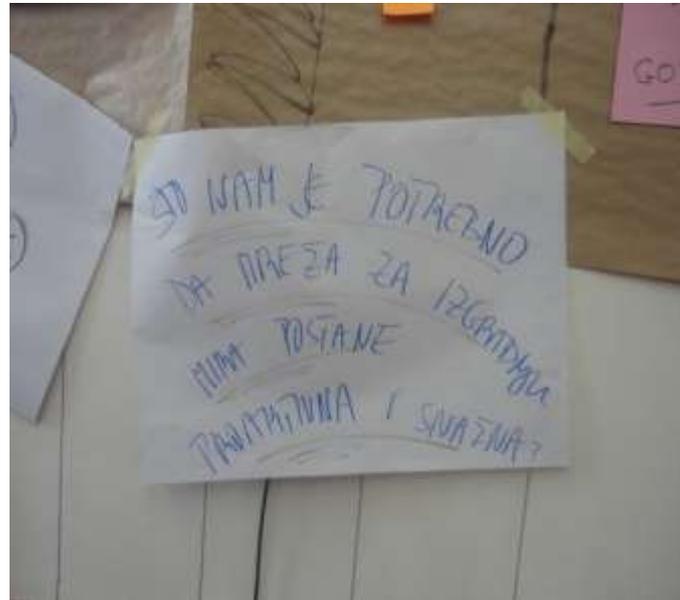
Network for Building Peace (the Network) is aiming towards comprehensive renewal of social and economic life in Bosnia and Herzegovina and to long-term enhancement of whole society to deal with difference and conflicts in constructive and non-violent way, in that way creating framework for joint, coordinated activities of number of civil society organizations, local government, business sector, media and governmental institutions.

Network has 85 members at the moment. Web-site www.mreza-mira.net is portal through which the Network regularly shares information to its members and other organizations in BiH on opened calls for proposals, seminars, trainings and conferences. Network has so far prepared two editions of Peace Calendar, five editions of Directory of Donors working in BiH, and on monthly basis has been preparing Peace Newsletter

Based on the initial letter from the Network for Building Peace the issues expressed to be considered through the strategic planning exercise were:

- "At the end we would like to have document which would prioritize and define development of the Network in forthcoming period. We have to define who we are, what we want to become, what are our values. How to select new members, to establish some joint platform (all to be dealt before strategic planning, where we will come with some recommendations to all members; our task).
- We have to reach some understanding and agreement on the financing, where (if all agrees) some membership fees are to be introduced. What about sponsorships from companies, how to deal with that?
- We have to see on Secretariat of the Network which would be collecting membership fees (something like NGO Council), and will be spending money accordingly to the needs defined at the strategic planning (e.g. costs to cover web-site, meetings, Srdjan Aleksic award which is listed below, etc.)
- In relation to this, hCa is currently implementing project and running Srdjan Aleksic award, where ideally it would be responsibility and property of the Network in forthcoming years. How do we move forward with this issue? How to make award "ours"? How to select jury, organize the event, get the money for the award and all activities related to it.
- Issue of registration is something to be tackled, and how to move forward with that issue. Do we need it or how could we work? Do we leave it at the unregistered level with organizations shifting in organization of activities or to register association or foundation?
- We need to tackle issue of applying to available funds, where Network is apply for Civil Society Fund RfP for sectoral networks, but also we expect that other organizations are to apply for funds to strengthen the network."

Report from the Strategic planning process was prepared by Ms. Martina Staznik who designed and facilitated workshop. During three days planning they were 38 participants in the process.



Rationale behind the design of the process and used methodology

In order to create atmosphere for initiation of the dialogue and to engage members in authentic dialogue related to the key issues for the Network's future we have based design of the process on using the participatory practices *Circle*, *Open Space Technology* and *Appreciative Inquiry*. Crafting a powerful question is an art and it is also the key to Participatory practices. Circle, Appreciative Inquiry and Open Space are all methodologies that have a powerful question at the centre. Hosting the space for powerful questions is a key leadership tool.

Since 1930s, organizations have used a deficit – based approach to problem solving. It begins with seeking out the problem, the weak link in the system. Typically, there is a diagnosis, and then alternative solutions are recommended. Appreciative Inquiry challenges this traditional paradigm with an “affirmative” approach, embracing an organization's challenges in a positive light. Organizations are not problematic. Indeed, no organization was created as a “problem”. Organizations, if anything are meant as solutions. But, even more than that, organizations are not even singular solutions. They are creative centers of human relatedness, alive with emergent and unlimited solutions.¹

The goal of an Open Space Technology meeting is to create time and space for people to engage deeply and creatively around issues of concern to them. The agenda is set by people with the power and desire to see it through, and typically, Open Space meetings result in transformative experiences for the individuals and groups involved. It is a simple and powerful way to catalyze effective working conversations and truly inviting organizations – to thrive in times of swirling change. Open Space is based in the belief that organizations and communities run on passion and responsibility. It allows groups of any size to self-organize around what they really care about to get things done. Open Space Technology is a natural communication process that recognizes that people take responsibility to pursue what they are passionate about, and it ensures that what is important to each participant will be discussed.

¹ Appreciative Inquiry Handbook For Leaders of Change 2nd edition; D.L.Cooperrider, D.Whitney, J.M.Stavros
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At this gathering during the three working days together three spaces are created: *Inspiration Space* where insights and new level of thinking were created, *Ideas Space* where insights were transformed into ideas, and at last *Implementation Space* where ideas become reality in form of Network's strategic document.

Interactive and participatory framework of the strategic planning was designed in order to assure a minimal structure and to support creative space for all participants in development of the vision of the Network for Building Peace.

Description and the main outputs of the process

The process started with a check in question „*From all the places in the world why did you decide to be here with us now?* “ as we arrived and settle in together. Since, this gathering was planned as a longer process; we wanted to set the context and container for the whole three days. We intend to begin well as we arrived, meet each other and understand individual and collective intention for this gathering. In the opening phase of gathering we continue with AI Interviews in pairs in order to create list of positive elements and preconditions that can support our dialogue and planning based on participant's positive experiences on similar joint activities.

After that, we opened an Open Space with a focus question: *What Network for Building Peace needs to become proactive and powerful?*

Then the facilitator provided an overview of the process and explained Open Space four principles and one law. After that facilitator invited participants with issues of concern to come into the circle, write the issue on a piece of paper and announces it to the group. Each convener placed his or her paper on the wall and chooses a time and a place to meet. This process continued until there were no more agenda items. For the three working sessions, conveners announced 12 issues to be discussed.

Then the group braked up and individual participants headed to the agenda wall, by now covered with a variety of sessions. Participants take note of the time and place for sessions they want to be involved in.

1st conversational round:

- a. Vision and Mission
- b. Membership Fee and Financing of the Network
- c. Active organizations in the Network
- d. National and ethic division of the civil society in BiH

2nd conversational round:

- a. Weak capacities of NGOs
- b. Structure of the Network
- c. Regional Cooperation
- d. How to increase impact in society

3rd conversational round

- a. Srđan Aleksić Prize
- b. Membership Criteria
- c. Language that we speak
- d. Communication! Membership contribution to Network

Working sessions have been convened during the first day in the afternoon. Sessions run in parallel and involve only those most deeply concerned. Each report hanged on the wall, providing an ongoing, real-time record of the discussions.

On a second day participants have been invited to choose one topic they want to develop further in next strategy planning sessions. Participants has selected following 7 themes to discuss during the second day.

1st conversational round:

- a. Vision and Mission
- b. Understanding of Peace
- c. Identity of the Network

2nd conversational round:

- a. Srđan Aleksić Prize
- b. Structure of the Network

3rd conversational round

- a. Membership Fee
- b. Membership Criteria

People come together in the whole circle with all the reports on flip chart papers hanging on the walls. At the conclusion of the day where participants were briefly presented by the spokesmen's of each of 7 working sessions. After presentations, participants were invited to share comments, insights and commitments arising from the presentations. Everyone was encouraged to contribute to discussion, deep reflection and sharing learning's.

On a third day of the gathering participants decided to try to define Network's values as a core element of the commitment of the organizations involved in membership. After working in small groups, a vivid discussion was held in a circle.

After defining values of the Network, an operational plan until the end of 2012 was developed in order to support transition period for the Network for Building Peace.

Process ended with a check out questions in a circle „*What are you taking with you home?* “

Summary of the evaluation by the participants

Evaluation was conducted in two ways. First, in a circle were participants were invited to share comments about this strategic dialogue. Concluding from this reflections and final words this was positive, constructive and motivation experience for the all involved. They recommended innovative way of work and facilitation, as well as focus on opening an important questions and taking the responsibility for the decision and future actions.

Then they were invited to fill in the evaluation questionnaires individually and anonymously.

In a table below summary of the evaluation questionnaire is presented:

Questions:	Average grade /from 1 to 5/
a. Provided time and space for the contribution of each participants	3,9
b. Methodology used and facilitation	4,5
c. Communication between participants	3,7
d. Satisfaction with outputs of the Planning	4,0
e. Organizational issues of the Planning /space, equipment, accommodation/	4,1
f. General evaluation of the Network's Strategic Dialogue	4,2
Additional comments:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>We are leaving with a concrete plan with materials that we will further develop in a documents</i> - <i>There were lot of experience and good will in a group</i> - <i>Different opinions were successfully transferred in some level of responsibility for the Network</i> - <i>Very dynamic and creative. Hope that I will have e chance to contribute in a future.</i> - <i>The fact that plan was created is a positive fact, but we all have to participate in implementation.</i> - <i>There were many different insight and thinking but culture of dialogue was present. Results were creativity and many ideas.</i> 	