

**12.07.2009.** During 6 to 11 July 2009 Association of Scouts of Azerbaijan did successfully deliver a project titled “**Living and Learning together: Peace Camp in the Caucasus**” next to Salimoba village of northern Azerbaijan.

This project idea materialized when with deep concern the World has witnessed that Caucasus turned into a bloody battlefield again in 2008, demonstrating how fragile the Peace is and how easily local and geopolitical tensions could transform into full scale warfare involving many countries across the globe, directly or indirectly. Escalation of cross-boarder conflict between Georgia and Russia have made leading power players in the world to take seriously these challenges in the context of political instability around 'frozen conflicts', as well their immediate effect on people in the Caucasus and particularly on youth. This region, historically well known for its extraordinary religious, ethnic and linguistic diversity, as well as for its geopolitical strategic location and abundant natural resources has topped the crises news again. Even prior to that, the reassertion of ethnic and national identities combined with the interests of external forces in the region and the nascent quasi democratic structures emerged after the collapse of the Soviet Union have resulted in various conflicts and divided societies, refugees and internally displaced persons which are still in exile. Having seriously taken these issues and building on its experience in peace education projects with young people, Association of Scouts of Azerbaijan in partnership with other youth organizations brought together broad range and diverse group of youth leaders from Azerbaijan, Georgia, Russian Federation and Turkey to equip them and their organizations with necessary skills, knowledge and competences to effectively deal with threats to the peace and enhance their competencies in peaceful transformations of conflicts. Exciting six-day (including arrival and departure days) training camp took place on the boarder area with Russian Federation in multi-ethnic environment of Nabran settlement next to the Caspian Sea, combining outdoor learning activities with friendly atmosphere of surrounding natural beauty of wild life resort area. Camp's methodology was focused on enabling participants to deal with issues of conflict transformation in a multi-cultural youth work context and contribute to peaceful conflict transformation. The participants collectively focused on analyzing various conflicts, how they relate to specific youth work contexts, particularly those of a multi-cultural nature and at the relevance of intercultural approaches to conflict transformation. In particular, methodologies did employ various scouting methods as learning by doing, intercultural group work, working in small groups, peer discussions, games, campfire gatherings and intercultural learning. Learning objectives of the course were: - To increase the capacity of participants in engaging with issues of solidarity and the peaceful transformation of conflicts in the Caucasus; - To explore and discuss different approaches to conflict transformation based on participants' own background and experiences; - With experts' input, to stimulate critical reflection on why, when and how to use the approaches in conflict transformation practice via developing conflict resolution, problem solving, negotiation, mediation and anger management skills; - To establish pool of competent leaders and trainers who can take learning from the course to their local youth work realities throughout Caucasus and beyond.

Concept of the camp itself and the design of the program have promoted a true notion of intercultural learning and exchange. This was not only achieved through the apparent exposure to cuisine and intercultural evenings, but opportunity for participants to experience cultural prisms and stereotyping by various sides of the boarder, leading to undersigning of some of the route causes of conflicts and misunderstanding. It was striking for participants, for example, how some elements of the shared history, could be perceived so radically different from each other over time.

Trainers did employ a wide array of non-formal learning approaches and materials, including outdoor activities and games. Experts' inputs were combined with opportunities for critical reflections by participants based on their own previous experiences deeply explored in thematic groups. Simulation games did develop some of the specific skills to deal with challenges of anger management and conflict transformation, thus providing some fun. The materials used reflected the objectives to be achieved, also vastly exposing participants to the publications by the Council of Europe, Responding to Conflict, Peace Cruise by WOSM, etc.

With support of:

