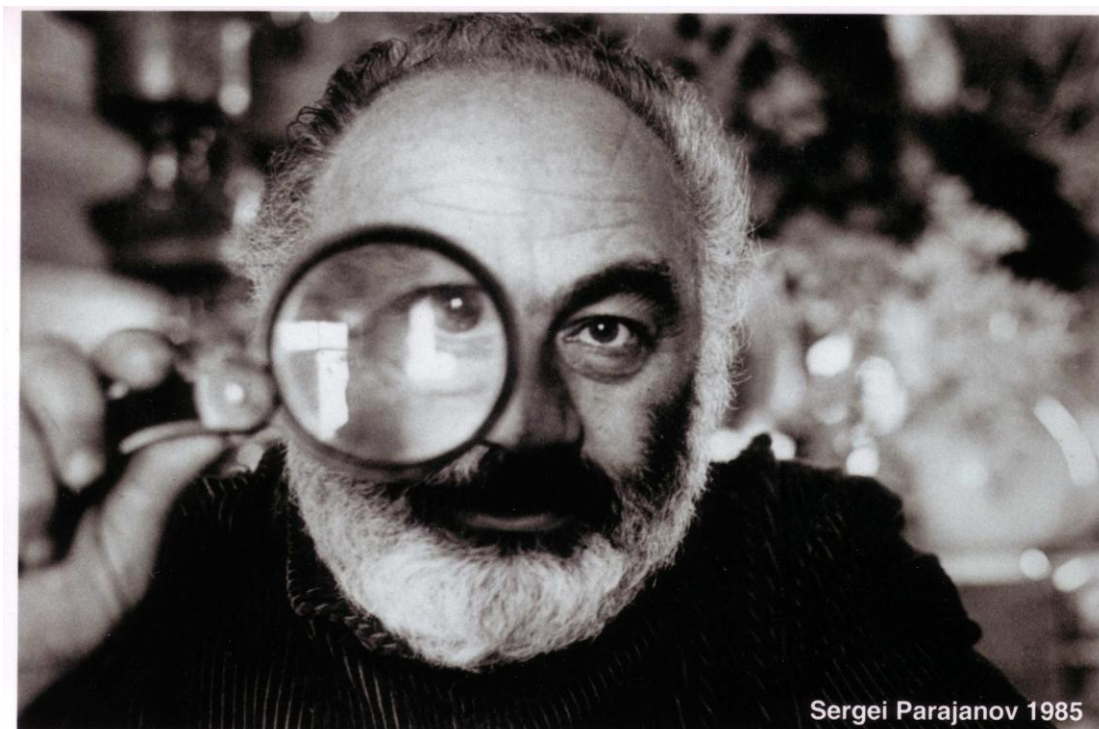




# **YMCA Europe 'Roots for Reconciliation' Project**

Report of External Assessment  
July-October, 2009



December 2009

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## Abbreviations

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| CRC       | Community Resource Centre   |
| EAY       | European Alliance of YMCAs (known now as YMCA Europe)                           |
| EED       | Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst, Germany                                       |
| GOP       | Global Operating Plan of YMCA International                                     |
| HEKS/EPER | Swiss Interchurch Aid   |
| ICCO      | Interchurch Organisation for Development Cooperation, The Netherlands           |
| RfR       | Roots for Reconciliation Project  |
| TPD       | Training Programme Developers component of the Roots for Reconciliation Project |

## Glossary

|                |  |
|----------------|--|
| Begleitung     | A process of accompaniment adopted by YMCA Europe in its work with member YMCA movements the aim of which is to empower local communities through effective leadership training and personal development, sustainable programmes, strong local infrastructures and in the longer term local autonomy which links independence with inter-dependence                                      |
| Camping        | A sustained experience that provides a creative educational opportunity in group living in the outdoors. It utilizes trained leadership and the resources of the natural surroundings to contribute to each camper's mental, physical, social and spiritual growth (source: American Camping Association)  |
| Reconciliation | A process that attempts to transform intense or lingering malevolence among parties previously engaged in a conflict or dispute into feelings of acceptance and even forgiveness of past animosities or detrimental acts. (source: Miller, Christopher E And Mary E. King (2005) A Glossary Of Terms And Concepts In Peace And Conflict Studies, University for Peace: Africa Programme) |
| The Region     | This refers to the region of South Caucasus. In the context of the RfR project, the South Caucasus Region comprises Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Nagorno Karabagh.   |

The cover photograph is of Sergei Parajanov (1924-1990), the great film-maker and artist whose passion for the South Caucasus has provided inspiration for the Roots for Reconciliation project. A photograph of the sculpture in Tbilisi that commemorates Parajanov forms part of the Roots for Reconciliation project logo.

## Summary

### 1. Introduction and Terms of Reference

This report summarises the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the external assessment of the YMCA Europe Roots for Reconciliation project. The external assessment was commissioned by YMCA Europe's Regional Development Secretary for the South Caucasus. The assessment process was intended to combine strongly the elements of external assessment and facilitated self-assessment therefore making it explicitly not a conventional evaluation<sup>1</sup>.

The three main areas of focus of the assessment were:

1. Resource mobilisation – to identify strengths and weaknesses
2. Regional / cross-border co-operation – to identify best practices
3. Peace and reconciliation work – to identify strengths, weaknesses and best practices

### 2. Methods used

The methods chosen required a high level of participation by project participants and National Coordinators in the selection, collection, analysis and interpretation of the data. The opportunities for data gathering were created through adding an evaluation element to already planned project events, thereby using the project activities as a basis for in depth learning. The participatory approach which involved project participants in the Assessment Team was particularly effective as it enabled them to gain first-hand experience of the purpose, process and outcomes of the project whilst also gaining practical experience of designing evaluation instruments, collecting, managing and interpreting data. The evaluation has developed capacity that will continue to be of value to the local and national YMCAs.

The main methods for data gathering used were:

- Questionnaire survey of project participants by members of the Assessment Team.
- Interview and testimony-collection by members of the Assessment Team.
- 'Framework Reunion' Ureki, Georgia
- Participant-observation of ProFest, Yerevan, Armenia, August 2009
- Document study (project plans, records of meetings, reports, other reviews and evaluations)
- Monitoring-data study.
- Visits to Community Resource Centre sites at Daranak, Armenia and Camp Orange, Georgia.

By actively involving the young participants of the project in a participatory process of data gathering, the assessment has enabled them to bear witness to each other, to strengthen relationships and their sense of identity, and to share their hopes and ideas for the future.

### 3. Conclusions

The Roots for Reconciliation project has been very successful in devising a process that creates a safe space for relationship-building based on 'Do No Harm' principles. The young people have used this space to build relationships across cultural divides, for example between Georgia and Russia and between Georgia and Nagorno Karabagh. They have done this on the basis of what can only be characterised as a deep love for their fellow young men and women. It is this ability to engender love across cultural and political divides that represents the main achievement of the project.

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<sup>1</sup> A conventional evaluation is here defined as an evaluation designed and conducted by an external consultant with the aim of reflecting his/her expert opinion on the organisation's work and results. This, facilitated external and self-assessment exercise was clearly aimed at facilitating a deep self-learning exercise through facilitating self-reflection combined with critical external assessment elements.

### 3.1 Relevance

Roots for Reconciliation is a well-designed project linking peace and reconciliation, young people's leadership development, and YMCA movement strengthening. Although its peace and reconciliation goals are very ambitious given the socio-political context in the south Caucasus, the approach taken is firmly rooted in the strengths of the YMCA as an organisation, the potential of the YMCA for strengthening democracy and the interests of young people living in the Region.

### 3.2 Effectiveness

The project has been very effective at **resource mobilisation** in terms of leveraging funding and drawing expertise into the YMCA movements in the Region.

**Cross-border co-operation** has undoubtedly been one of the major successes of the project. The project has organised 14 successful cross-border events in the period from January 2007 to July 2009 and has also created a 'cross-border culture' in the YMCA movements in the region.

The **peace and reconciliation** work of the project has been central to the project's identity. The project has taken an understandably cautious and measured approach to this sensitive work. As a result, the project has had significant success in bringing together young people from countries in conflict and transforming their understanding of each other and of themselves. Many of the participants have reported that the Roots for Reconciliation project has had a life-changing effect on them.

A further success of the project has been its contribution to **YMCA movement strengthening**. By providing leadership training, programme development (particularly using camping programmes), opportunities for collaboration and resource mobilisation, the project has strengthened capacity at individual, local and national levels. The most significant part of movement strengthening – developing financial sustainability – will have to wait for the delayed completion of the Community Resource Centre component.

The main area where the project has not yet achieved its goals concerns the project's **outreach to communities**. This is partly due to delays in the development of the four Community Resource Centres but also because of limited mainstreaming of the project's work in the local and National YMCAs.

### 3.3 Efficiency

The question of efficiency must be viewed against the backdrop of a project design that places significant emphasis on investment in the construction and/or refurbishment of Community Resource Centre buildings. The project management leadership at the regional and national levels need to utilize external expertise more in the future so that the demands of CRC construction and management do not detract valuable time and energy away from critical program activities.

The figures for the project show that in the years 2007 and 2008, approximately 25% of the project expenditure was spent on events directly involving young people. If the investment in the Community Resource Centres during that period is removed from the equation, the amount spent on project events involving young people was still considerably less than half of the remaining expenditure.

### 3.4 Gender

The project has been quite successful in taking a gender sensitive approach in its work with the project participants. Participant selection, event programming and providing a safe and supportive environment have all contributed to young women as well as young men feeling that they can contribute and benefit equally from the project.

### 3.5 Impact

The impact of a project that is still underway is difficult, if not impossible, to assess. At this stage in the life of the RfR project it is more appropriate to consider *outcomes* rather than impact.

The project's work with **individuals** has led to growth in confidence and leadership skills; meaningful and sustained relationships with young people from other cultures based on tolerance and understanding; and more active engagement within their local YMCA using their new skills and knowledge.

The project's work with **communities** is less easy to identify. There is evidence of the potential effect that the project can have on communities by looking at the work of the Daranak Community Resource Centre which works with refugee children in the local villages to provide popular classes and activities.

The outcome of the project's work with **other stakeholders** is limited. The project's understandable reluctance to raise its profile means that it has only limited contact with other civil society organisations working with young people on peace and reconciliation issues. As a result there is no evidence that partnerships or collaborative ventures involving the project and other stakeholders is under discussion or is underway.

### 3.6 Sustainability

The project has made considerable progress towards bringing about sustainable benefits for the target audiences by developing leadership skills, mobilising resources and establishing the capacity for cross-border work at national and local YMCA levels. The main piece of the sustainability puzzle that is not yet in place is the Community Resource Centre component.

### 3.7 Transparency and accountability

The project has benefited from excellent leadership from the Project Coordinator who has demonstrated dedication, insight, sensitivity, commitment and an ability to facilitate collaborative working relationships. These qualities have without doubt had a positive effect on the development and accountability of the Roots for Reconciliation project.

The project has a system for monitoring the achievement of project outputs using evaluations at the end of each event. These evaluations have become more sophisticated and there is now a greater emphasis on assessing whether the outcomes of the events have been achieved (not simply looking at the activities and outputs). The project would benefit from further strengthening of the recording and monitoring systems in order to make the best use of the management information for future planning.

The project's reporting system conforms to strict donor requirements and no concerns have been raised during this assessment about a lack of transparency concerning the use of project funds.

## 4. Recommendations

### 4.1 YMCA Europe

- a. Establish an action group to prepare a formal response to this report and coordinate action on agreed recommendations.
- b. Continue to build on the achievements of the Roots for Reconciliation project in the region and elsewhere by taking a more programmatic<sup>2</sup> approach to Roots for Reconciliation in the future.
- c. Consolidate the changes made by the project through the planned YMCA 'movement development' process in the forthcoming YMCA 'movement strengthening' process.
- d. Identify more opportunities for cross-border cooperation between YMCAs outside the South Caucasus region in order to build on the successes of the project.
- e. Foster co-operation with international organisations such as the International Awards Association in order to explore possibilities for extending the work of the project in Turkey and Azerbaijan.
- f. In any future regional YMCA project consider creating a formal steering group involving representatives from each of the involved national YMCAs in order to support project implementation and monitoring.
- g. Ensure that future regional project proposals include budgets for adequate levels of staffing to provide the administrative resources required for managing projects of this scale.

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<sup>2</sup> By programmatic is meant moving away from an 'events' approach towards an approach that aims to support the integration of peace and reconciliation and movement strengthening into the regular programme activities of the local and national YMCAs.

- h. Ensure that the logframes for future projects include a clear statement of the problem situation that the project is intended to address and indicators that make it easier to monitor and evaluate progress.

#### 4.2 Roots for Reconciliation Project

- a. Develop a plan for the year of extension funding (2010) with clear objectives and targets concerning sustainability of project benefits.
- b. Link the proposed 'competitive application process' for deciding allocation of project resources and provision of support to national YMCA strategy development and capacity-building where necessary. This will help to ensure that national YMCAs can make best use of available funding and strengthen their capacities for sustainability.
- c. Investigate the possibilities of extending the work of the project to address other peace and reconciliation issues. For example, the project should continue its work building relations with YMCA Russia. Consideration should be given to extend the project to involve participants from Turkey in order to respond to the current improvements in diplomatic and economic relations between Armenia and Turkey. In any such development the 'Do No Harm' principle should always be applied.
- d. Build stronger relationships with other projects and organisations in the Region working with youth and with peace and reconciliation issues for the purposes of mutual learning and potential partnerships.
- e. Create a 'participant committee' comprising participants who are actively involved in the project and who can act as a direct voice in the project for all participants.
- f. Recognise all the participants as project resources who could be asked to play a more active role in identifying and working on project-related issues between the events, reach out and influence others and generally help to further strengthen the YMCA movement in the region.
- g. Develop a gender policy that encourages reflection and discussion on gender roles in the project, the YMCA and beyond.
- h. Develop a more rigorous electronic record-keeping system to enable easier monitoring of the project's progress. Ensure that the monitoring is gender sensitive.
- i. Develop an internet presence to act as a hub for communication with and between participants. If possible, the YMCA corporate website should be extended to host this communication hub so that project participants feel part of the wider YMCA movement.

#### 4.3 National YMCAs

- a. Each national YMCA should update its strategic plan to incorporate lessons learned from the experience of working with the RfR project.
- b. National YMCAs should assess what organisational and management capacities still need to be strengthened in order to take on a more proactive role and ensure sustainability.<sup>3</sup>
- c. The completion of the Community Resource Centres should be seen as a priority. Plans for marketing the CRCs should be developed as a key part of each national YMCA movement's strategy for sustainability.
- d. Where needed, there should be clarification about the ownership of the CRCs as assets. Clear procedures will be needed for marketing and using the CRC and how the income generated will be divided. Procedures should be agreed for each CRC as part of a business plan. The business plans should encourage the year-round use of the centres.
- e. Explore ways of ensuring the Community Resource Centres take an environmentally sensitive and sustainable approach to electricity generation, hot

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<sup>3</sup> An Organisational Self-Assessment tool could be used by each of the national movements for this purpose.



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water heating, water supply and sewage disposal. Technologies used should be low impact and, wherever possible, self-build to reduce costs.

- f. Organise training in environmentally sustainable practices for leaders and volunteers in order to raise the level of awareness and understanding about the importance of these issues.
- g. Consider using the CRCs as centres for practical environmental education including courses on the construction of sustainable hot water and electricity generation systems.
- h. To ensure that the maximum use is made of its CRCs, YMCA Armenia should seek professional help for developing and marketing its camping programme. The person involved should have excellent strategic thinking and marketing skills.
- i. YMCA Georgia should seek professional help for mobilising resources for the CRC and oversight of the CRC construction as a project. The consultant should have a proven track record in resource mobilisation and project management.
- j. Funding for the professional help referred to in points h and i. above should be made available through the RfR project 'competitive application process' which will be introduced in 2010.
- k. Establish a management structure in each national YMCA to oversee the finalisation and use of the Community Resource Centres. National YMCAs should also consider co-opting experts as advisers to these bodies.

### 4.4 Local YMCAs

- a. Sustain and extend the local-to-local YMCA relationships both in-country and cross-border that have been built as a result of the RfR project.
- b. Take a strategic approach to the selection of participants for project events as part of a strategy for leadership development.
- c. Ensure that every young volunteer and leader has an individual development plan so that they are helped to develop a longer term commitment to their local YMCA. Each young leader should be allocated an experienced mentor who can guide their development and discuss their ambitions on a regular basis.
- d. Consider setting up an 'exchange' system whereby young leaders from one country can work alongside leaders from another country to organise and run camps and other activities for children.

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*People are often unreasonable, illogical, and self-centered; Forgive them anyway.  
If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish ulterior motives; Be kind anyway.  
If you are successful, you will win some false friends and some true enemies; Succeed anyway.  
If you are honest and frank, people may cheat you; Be honest and frank anyway.  
What you spend years building, someone could destroy overnight. Build anyway.  
If you find serenity and happiness, they may be jealous; Be happy anyway.  
The good you do today, people will often forget tomorrow; Do good anyway.  
Give the world the best you have, and it may never be enough; Give the best you've got anyway.  
You see, in the final analysis it is between you and God; it was never between you and them anyway.*

Mother Teresa of Calcutta

quoted during the closing session of ProFest, September 2009 Yerevan, Armenia,

## 1. Introduction

This report summarises the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the external assessment of the YMCA Europe Roots for Reconciliation project. The external assessment was commissioned by YMCA Europe's Regional Development Secretary for the South Caucasus and covers the period from January 2007 to July 2009. The assessment process was intended to take the form of a facilitated self-assessment and explicitly not a conventional evaluation. This was made clear in the Terms of Reference as follows:

*"The YMCA Europe would like to see this assessment process to be not only as participatory as possible, but to be a facilitated process where YMCA staff themselves work on defining Best Practices and elements for improvement. The process should involve all the levels engaged into the project implementation, namely: international – i.e. YMCA Europe, national – i.e. YMCA Armenia, YMCA Georgia and in YMCA Nagorno Karabagh and local. These different stakeholders are aimed to be mobilised through the assessment process in order to creatively contribute to the improvement of the quality, effectiveness, sustainability and relevance of the programme."*

The design of the assessment evolved to take into account the capacity constraints and other practical issues. The necessary changes placed greater responsibility on the external consultant – particularly during the analysis and report-writing stages - than was initially envisaged.

In order to maximise opportunities for the participation of the young leaders, the assessment process was designed to take place over a longer period than would normally be the case for a conventional evaluation. Data gathering began in July 2009 and continued to October. The more measured pace allowed the assessment to itself become a capacity-building process for those involved. The analysis of the data took place in October and the initial findings, conclusions and recommendations were presented and discussed at the Program Forum meeting held in Yerevan, Armenia on 1 November 2009.

This report provides background information on the Roots for Reconciliation project (Section 3) and describes the Terms of Reference (Section 4) and the methodology used (Section 5). In Section 6 the main messages from key stakeholders in the project are described in detail. Section 7 addresses the questions posed in the Terms of Reference and Section 8 draws conclusions and identifies 'strategic challenges' facing the project and the YMCAs involved. Finally in Section 9 specific and actionable recommendations are presented.

## 2. Acknowledgements

The job of external evaluator in a conventional evaluation is often an isolated one. Not so in a participatory self-assessment process. Whilst the evaluator in a participatory assessment process has a professional duty to remain constructively critical, by definition he or she does not carry out the work alone. A self-assessment process requires a dedicated group of people who are committed to seek the views of others and be open to

the feedback they receive. The external evaluator must ensure that all of those involved have the opportunity to have their voices heard, must listen to what is said by everyone involved and must also ensure that the organisation's capacity is strengthened through the assessment process.

The assessment process carried out during the period from July to October 2009 would, quite literally, not have been possible without the enthusiastic and dedicated work of the young people who formed the Assessment Team. These were young leaders who, for the most part, were relatively inexperienced in project management and evaluation methodology. Almost all were unpaid volunteers and all were passionate in their willingness to learn and serve. They are all a credit to their local YMCAs and their countries. Working with them was a privilege.

The three National Coordinators for the project - Ghazaros Bardakchyan, David Melqumyan Revaz Shavladze – through their willingness to devote significant amounts of time and energy to the assessment – signalled its importance to others in the National and Local YMCAs. Their inputs are greatly appreciated.

Nele de Meyer, the Coordinator of the EED Dialogue and Support Office for South Caucasus provided much-valued guidance and support during the assessment process. Her clarity of thought, patience and diplomacy all contributed significantly to the assessment process.

This report is indebted to all of those who agreed to be interviewed or to complete questionnaires as part of the assessment process. The officials who were interviewed are listed in Appendix Three but there are many more young leaders whose names do not appear in that list. They know who they are and their contributions are gratefully appreciated.

Finally, I would like to express my thanks to Vardan Hambardzumyan. As Regional Coordinator of the Roots for Reconciliation project he has been involved in its birth, growth and development from initial idea to maturity. It is not easy to expose a project in which you have invested years of your professional life to the scrutiny of others. Vardan Hambardzumyan did this with an open heart and an eager mind. By leading by example in this way he embodied the spirit of the project throughout the assessment process.

### **3. The 'Roots for Reconciliation' Project**

The Roots for Reconciliation project promotes participatory democracy building and peaceful transformation of the conflicts in the region of the Caucasus. The project is implemented by YMCA Europe in co-operation with YMCA Armenia, YMCA Georgia and YMCA in Nagorno Karabagh. The main donors are EED Germany and ICCO Netherlands with other support from HEKS/EPER Switzerland, YMCA Germany, YMCA Netherlands and YMCA of the USA.

The project staff comprises:

- The YMCA Europe Regional Secretary for the South Caucasus (based in Yerevan, Armenia), acting as the project coordinator with half-time involvement;
- Seconded by the National YMCAs staff acting as National Coordinators with full-time involvement both in Armenia and Georgia and half-time in Nagorno Karabagh.

The Roots for Reconciliation project partnership map and governance/management structure are summarised in Figure 3.1.

**Figure 3.1 Roots for Reconciliation Project Partnership Map and Governance/Management Structure**

QuickTime™ and a  
decompressor  
are needed to see this picture.

The peace building approach used in the project consists of "bringing together young people from the conflicting sides and build sustaining bridges between them through the YMCA network".

In the Terms of Reference for the assessment, the project is described as follows:

*"The specific project objective set to be achieved within its implementation period (i.e. 2007 – 2009) is as follows: through developing camping programme as a strong and tested leadership and cooperation building facility and measure, to further strengthen and extend the YMCA Movement in the Caucasus, as a mass-membership, ecumenical network standing for integrity of creation, peace and justice.*

*In order to reach the above project objective the YMCA Europe in cooperation with the YMCA Movements in the region and other international and local partner organisations are to secure the achievement of the following intermediate results:*

*To open and build up relevant capacities within the targeted Movements through delivering series of training and support measures in form of:*

*Annual Training Programme Developer (hereafter TPD) seminars to be held each Spring enrolling up to 30 participants and with expected result to develop human resources within the targeted Movements for effective project planning, implementation and monitoring in general, the scheduled RfR sub-project components in particular.*

*Annual YMCA Europe General Assemblies (hereafter GA) normally taking place in Spring and for the framework of the RfR also providing platform for regular meetings of the representatives from each targeted Movement and their YMCA partners, through this securing stakeholder participatory and considered review of the implemented or preparation of the identified sub-project components.*

*Annual Programme Forums (hereafter PF) to be held each Fall enrolling up to 30 local and international participants and with expected result to evaluate the results and display the*

*best practices so far, as well as to provide platform for coordination and consolidation of partner commitments towards further project delivery and supplementary measures.*

*To develop the YMCA profile and capacities in camping programme on the one hand, in conflict prevention / resolution work on the other, through organizing Reunion sub-projects in form of residential youth camps, festivals, conferences, etc.(including prior leader training / preparation schemes), within the interconnected thematic priorities specified for each year of the project implementation, namely:*

*"Integration" for 2007, meaning that the targeted YMCA Movements are internalizing the RfR implementation logic and methodology through cross-border joint efforts.*

*"Civic Participation" for 2008, meaning that the targeted YMCA Movements are further enhancing civic engagement and networking within the project especially through adequate responses to the acute challenges faced by their individual societies or shared by the entire region.*

*"Conflict Resolution" for 2009, meaning that all the implementing parties within the RfR have geared up resource mobilization capacities and developmental approaches enabling them to successfully apply joint efforts in transferring resources towards the critical need of conflict prevention and transformation in the region.*

*To establish YMCA Community Resource Centres (hereafter CRC) providing cost-effective venue for Reunion sub-projects within this project, the YMCA camping and youth tourism self- sustainable network in supplement, simultaneously serving as YMCA day centres for youth from the marginalized communities where those facilities are located:*

*In Armenia the construction / renovation works in both the CRCs (Pambak, Daranak) are to be completed, and the facilities are to be equipped and furnished ready for full operation based on business plans developed and approved.*

*In Georgia potential location of a CRC is to be identified and obtained, feasibility studies conducted and developmental plan worked out and set up.*

*In Nagorno Karabakh potential location of a CRC is to be identified and obtained, feasibility studies conducted and developmental plan worked out and set up.*

*However it is important to accent that the achievement of the above project developmental goal, specific objective and results great deal is subject to the given economic and political context in the targeted region. They cannot but be especially in interaction with certain factors like the process of the settlement or aggravation of the frozen armed conflicts in the region and beyond it, as well as the economic and administration environment where the operations are carried out."*

## **4. Terms of Reference**

### **The rationale, purpose and objectives of the assessment**

The rationale, purpose and objectives of the assessment are described in the Terms of Reference (see Appendix One). The RfR project is nearing the end of its current three-year funding period (January 2007-December 2009) and wished to assess its achievements, identify lessons learned and good practices for wider dissemination and examine areas for future development.

There was a strong emphasis in the ToR on self-assessment though it is also recognised that there should be an element of critical external examination, particularly of the approaches used for peace-building and reconciliation.

*"The primary purpose of this facilitated self-assessment of the programme is to review the RfR inputs and strategies utilised so far, and through contextual analyses refine whether the project intermediate results and specific objective are achieved or likely to be achieved and how far they are to promote the developmental goal set? The main instrumental purpose of the facilitated self-evaluation is the formulation and documentation of Best Practices derived from the programme, to be used as a basis for re-defining the future strategy on regional strategy.*

*The YMCA Europe would like to see this assessment process to be not only as participatory as possible, but to be a facilitated process where YMCA staff themselves work on defining*

*Best Practices and elements for improvement. The process should involve all the levels engaged into the project implementation, namely: international – i.e. YMCA Europe, national – i.e. YMCA Armenia, YMCA Georgia and in YMCA Nagorno Karabagh and local. These different stakeholders are aimed to be mobilised through the assessment process in order to creatively contribute to the improvement of the quality, effectiveness, sustainability and relevance of the programme.”*

The three main areas of focus of the assessment will be:

1. Resource mobilisation – to identify strengths and weaknesses
2. Regional / cross-border co-operation – to identify best practices
3. Peace and reconciliation work – to identify strengths, weaknesses and best practices

### **Assessment scope**

The assessment covers the two and a half years from January 2007 to July 2009 plus the planning period that led to the accepted project proposal. It examines the project activities, outputs and outcomes in the three main implementing countries and the cross-border co-operation in the Region.

The assessment describes and assess the theory of change and intervention logic underpinning the project, with particular focus on resource mobilisation, Regional / cross-border co-operation and the approach to reconciliation and peace-building.

Given the unpredictable and challenging socio-political and economic environment in the Caucasus, particular attention has been paid to the changing context of the project and how the project has evolved to adapt these changes.

### **Assessment questions**

The following questions - based on those identified in the 'Terms of Reference' and relating to the OECD DAC criteria for evaluating development assistance- are addressed in this report.

#### **1. Relevance**

- 1.1 What model of reconciliation has been used to guide the project design?
- 1.2 What were the consequences of the choice of this model?
- 1.3 What analysis was done of the need and context before planning the project?
- 1.4 How effectively did the planning process examine good practices from other similar projects?
- 1.5 To what extent was the project well-designed?
- 1.6 How well-defined were the outcomes?
- 1.7 To what extent do the activities and programme goals reflect the needs and context of the target communities?
- 1.8 Overall, what lessons can be learned concerning project relevance?

#### **2. Effectiveness**

- 2.1 What intended outcomes have been achieved, not achieved and why concerning:
  - Resource mobilisation
  - Cross-border co-operation
  - Peace and reconciliation work
- 2.2 What unintended outcomes have been achieved? How?
- 2.3 Does the project reach the intended beneficiaries?
- 2.4 Is the project consistent with YMCA's values and principles?
- 2.5 How have participants' lives been changed by the project?
- 2.6 How have the national YMCA organisations developed as a result of the project?

2.7 Overall, what lessons can be learned concerning project effectiveness?

**3. Efficiency**

How many people have benefited directly, indirectly?

Could the same results have been achieved at lower costs?

How well have the resources been used?

Could better results have been achieved by using the resources in different ways?

Overall, what lessons can be learned concerning project efficiency?

**4. Flexibility**

4.1 In what ways has the context changed during the project's lifetime?

4.2 How has the project responded to the changing context?

4.3 Has the project been proactive enough to respond to the changing context?

4.4 What has been the effect of external influences on the achievement of intended outcomes?

4.5 How has the project evolved over time?

**5. Gender**

5.1 How were gender issues addressed in the project design and implementation?

5.2 How effectively does the project meet the needs of young women as well as young men?

**6. Impact**

6.1 What has been the impact of the project on individuals, their communities and other stakeholders?

6.2 In what ways has the project influenced services and collaborations within the targeted communities? In what ways has the project created social and economic opportunities for the targeted communities?

6.3 In what ways has the project influenced the YMCA 'Movement Strengthening' process in the Region?

6.4 Overall, what lessons can be learned concerning project impact?

**7. Sustainability**

7.1 How long-lasting is the flow of benefits to the beneficiaries and to society in general likely to be? Why?

7.2 What plans are there to enable systems, structures, processes and relationships to endure?

7.3 What has been learned from the project experience?

**8. Transparency and accountability**

8.1 How transparent has been the use of project funds?

8.2 How transparent has been the governance and management of the project at both Regional and national levels?

8.3 How has accountability been organised?

8.4 To whom are the implementing organisations accountable in theory and in practice and how is accountability guaranteed?

## **5. Assessment methodology**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The commissioning organisation, YMCA Europe, specified in the ToR that the assessment should be "highly participatory, externally facilitated self-assessment process involving all

the levels engaged by the project, with the expert (organisation) acting rather as a facilitator of this process".

The reason for this was that the assessment should be consistent with the values that underpin the project. In other words, the assessment process itself should build capacity and thus contribute to greater sustainability of the project activities after the initial funding comes to an end.

The suggested framework for this participatory approach is three-fold with an Assessment Team and Steering Group working in close collaboration with an external consultant and EED Support Worker.

The timeframe was planned in a way that would maximise the involvement of the Assessment Team as data collectors. Inevitably, this was slower than a conventional evaluation but the combination of self-assessment team and external evaluator was intended to provide an effective combination of capacity-development, learning and an independent perspective.

In order not to overstretch the time availability of National Coordinators and participants, it was important to use the Reunions within the programme for the planning, implementation and analyses and feedback in the evaluation.

## 5.2 The Assessment Team

In order to make the most efficient use of limited resources and to ensure high levels of participation, the data collection for the assessment was planned to be carried out by an Assessment Team of 20 persons comprising 15 young leaders involved with the project, the RfR Regional Coordinator, the three National Coordinators and the Framework consultant. (see Appendix Two for a complete list). The team collectively was responsible for data gathering, initial analysis of data and contributing sections to the assessment report under the guidance of the Steering Group.

The Assessment Team's responsibilities are detailed in Appendix Three. A Reunion was held in Ureki, Georgia from July 16-20, 2009 to:

- finalise the plans for the assessment
- finalise the assessment team and National Coordinator job descriptions
- provide training in participatory evaluation for Assessment Team members
- agree responsibilities for data gathering
- confirm work plans for Assessment Team members and National Coordinators
- prepare for the August Reunion.

The members of the Assessment Team took a very active role in the data collection process. They helped to design the questionnaires and interview protocols and translated these into Georgian and Armenian. They also practiced interviewing skills and then conducted the interviews with other participants and with local YMCA leaders. Finally, they recorded and translated interviews and questionnaire responses and prepared the data for processing and collation.

## 5.3 The Steering Group

A small steering group of five persons was set up to guide the assessment. The group will be 'virtual', meeting using Skype, email and conference calls. The Steering Group comprised the RfR Project Coordinator, the three RfR National Coordinators, the representative of the EED Dialogue and Support Office (DS Office) for South Caucasus and the external consultant from Framework. The role of this group was to:

- develop and agree the assessment plans, process and data gathering sources and methods in co-operation with the Assessment Team
- finalise and communicate the timeline and process of the assessment
- ensure the Assessment Team remained focused and on track
- provide support and guidance to the Assessment Team when needed
- ensure that the Assessment Team delivers their tasks on time



- comment on the draft sections of the assessment report

#### **5.4 The Framework consultant**

The Framework consultant acted as facilitator for the assessment process and also contributed his own findings, analysis and recommendations to the assessment report. The role of the external consultant was to:

- propose ways of conducting the assessment in a participatory and rigorous way
- support and challenge those involved in the assessment process
- work closely with the RfR Project Coordinator to develop ways of integrating the assessment process into the project programme, particularly by contributing to the plans for the Programme Festival in Armenia in August
- take overall responsibility for planning the Reunion in July of the Assessment Team, in co-operation with other members of the Steering Group,
- take overall responsibility for facilitating the training/meeting of the Assessment Team in July in cooperation with other members of the Steering Group
- attend, observe and participate in the Regional Reunion in August; specifically, to facilitate or co-facilitate sessions relating to the assessment process held during the Regional Retreat
- observe, when possible, the work of community elements of the RfR project and develop an overall understanding of the project's work
- organise regular on-line meetings of the Steering Group to monitor the progress of the Assessment Team's workplans
- provide on-going support to other members of the Steering Group
- reflect on the written findings and analysis of the Assessment Team and assist them in developing their conclusions
- edit the assessment report, bringing together the sections prepared by the Assessment Team and those sections written by the external consultant himself (as specified below)
- write a description of a) the overall process of evaluation, methods used and dynamics aimed at, b) additional observations, findings and recommendations to the YMCA learning process, from the perspective of an external evaluator, c) concrete suggestions for the future strategy and practice, based on his own expertise and knowledge.
- participate in the final closing Program Forum in October/November 2009

#### **5.5 The EED Support Worker**

The EED Support Worker worked closely with the Framework consultant as a member of the Steering Group to support the Assessment Team in the conduct of the assessment. The role of the Support Worker was to:

- play an active role as a member of the Steering Group
- work closely with the external consultant, contributing to the design of the assessment process
- liaise with other stakeholders in the assessment
- participate in the planning/training reunion in July, co-facilitating sessions where appropriate
- provide on-going support to the Assessment Team and other Steering Group members
- comment on the analysis of the findings
- comment on the draft assessment report

## 5.6 Sources of data

The assessment gathered data from a wide range of stakeholders and other interested parties. The main sources of data were:

- Project participants – particularly those involved in past and current project events
- Leadership of the national and local YMCAs
- National Coordinators of the RfR project
- Key YMCA Europe staff
- Representatives of partner organisations (including donors and YMCA partners)

## 5.7 Assessment methods

The methods chosen required a high level of participation by project participants and National Coordinators in the selection, collection, analysis and interpretation of the data. The opportunities for data gathering provided by planned project events. The participatory approach involving project participants in the Assessment Team was particularly effective as it enabled them to gain first-hand experience of the purpose, process and outcomes of the project whilst also gaining practical experience of designing instruments, collecting, managing and interpreting data. This has developed capacity that will continue to be of value to the local and national YMCAs involved in the project.

The main methods for data gathering used were:

- Questionnaire survey of project participants by members of the Assessment Team.
- Interview and testimony-collection by members of the Assessment Team.
- 'Framework Reunion' held in Ureki, Georgia
- Participant-observation of ProFest, Yerevan, Armenia, August 2009
- Document study (project plans, records of meetings, reports, other reviews and evaluations)
- A study of the project's monitoring-data.
- Visits to Community Resource Centre sites at Daranak, Armenia and Camp Orange, Georgia.

## 6. Main Messages from 'Key Stakeholder' Data

This section contains the main messages from the key stakeholders whose views on the project were collected and analysed during the assessment process. The key stakeholder groups are the project participants; leaders of local YMCAs involved in the project; leaders of the national YMCA movements covered by the project; YMCA Europe staff; RfR project coordinators,

### 6.1 RfR Project Participants

Data about and from participants in the RfR project was collected using project records, event evaluations, questionnaire survey, interviews and testimonies.

#### 6.1.1 Project Records

A timeline of project events can be found as Appendix Four.

There was no centralised record of participant attendances in all Roots for Reconciliation events so this information had to be collated for this evaluation (record-keeping is one area in which improved practice by the project as a whole and the national leadership would make monitoring and evaluating progress a lot easier).

A total of 175 participants made 442 attendances at 14 major Roots for Reconciliation events during the period covered by this assessment - January 2007 to July 2009. Of the 175 participants 57.7% were female and 42.37% were male. A total of 61.1 % of participants were volunteers (including Board members), 11.4% were paid staff and 27.4% are no longer involved. This last figure means that more than one quarter of those

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who were involved in RfR events are no longer active with the project – a significant attrition rate though understandable given the nature of the YMCA as a youth organisation.

Table 6.1 shows the number of people who attended from one to all fourteen events. The figures show that fewer than one in four participants attended more than two events. Almost half of the participants attended only one event. Only one person attended all 14 events. This demonstrates on the one hand the limited continuity of attendance at events and on the other, the profound effect that even a small exposure to the project has had on individual participants.

| Number of events | Number of people | Percentage |
|------------------|------------------|------------|
| 1                | 80               | 45.7       |
| 2                | 51               | 29.1       |
| 3                | 9                | 5.1        |
| 4                | 14               | 8.0        |
| 5                | 4                | 2.3        |
| 6                | 1                | 0.6        |
| 7                | 4                | 2.3        |
| 8                | 2                | 1.1        |
| 9                | 4                | 2.3        |
| 10               | 2                | 1.1        |
| 11               | 1                | 0.6        |
| 12               | 0                | 0.0        |
| 13               | 2                | 1.1        |
| 14               | 1                | 0.6        |
| TOTAL            | 175              | 100.0      |

Participation by origin of participants is shown in Table 6.2. This table shows that 85.7% of project participants were from the region.

| Origin                         | Number of participants | Percentage of total participants |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Armenia (7 non-YMCA)           | 81                     | 46.3                             |
| Georgia (4 non-YMCA)           | 44                     | 25.1                             |
| Nagorno Karabagh (10 non-YMCA) | 25                     | 14.3                             |
| Norway                         | 10                     | 0.6                              |
| Russia (5 non-YMCA)            | 6                      | 1.1                              |
| Poland (non-YMCA)              | 2                      | 0.6                              |
| Switzerland                    | 2                      | 5.7                              |
| Bangladesh                     | 1                      | 1.1                              |

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| Origin         | Number of participants | Percentage of total participants |
|----------------|------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Czech Republic | 1                      | 0.6                              |
| Germany        | 1                      | 3.4                              |
| UK (non-YMCA)  | 1                      | 0.6                              |
| US             | 1                      | 0.6                              |
| <b>TOTAL</b>   | <b>175</b>             | <b>100.0</b>                     |

Participation by local YMCA is summarised in Table 6.3. This table shows that three out of every ten YMCA member participants were from Georgia, five out of ten were from Armenia and two out of ten from Nagorno Karabagh. The number of attendances is approximately proportionate to the numbers of participants.

| YMCA                       | Number of YMCA members who were participants at RfR events | Percentage of total number of participants who were YMCA members | Number of attendances by participants who were YMCA members | Percentage of total number of attendances by YMCA members |
|----------------------------|--|--|---|---|
| Batumi, Georgia            | 9  | 6.9  | 22  | 5.7   |
| Telavi, Georgia            | 11   | 8.5  | 43  | 11.2  |
| Tibilisi, Georgia          | 17   | 13.1   | 54  | 14.0  |
| National YMCA              | 3  | 2.3  | 23  | 6.0   |
| <b>TOTAL Georgia</b>       | <b>41</b>  | <b>31.5</b>  | <b>142</b>  | <b>36.9</b>   |
| Ozone, Armenia             | 10   | 7.7  | 23  | 6.0   |
| Spitak, Armenia            | 10   | 7.7  | 29  | 7.5   |
| Triangle, Armenia          | 2  | 1.5  | 2   | 0.5   |
| Vanadzor, Armenia          | 18   | 13.8   | 42  | 10.9  |
| Vardenis, Armenia          | 12   | 9.2  | 30  | 7.8   |
| Yerevan, Armenia           | 9  | 6.9  | 27  | 7.0   |
| National YMCA              | 3  | 2.3  | 18  | 4.7   |
| <b>TOTAL Armenia</b>       | <b>64</b>  | <b>49.2</b>  | <b>171</b>  | <b>44.4</b>   |
| Artsakh / Nagorno Karabagh | 25   | 19.2   | 72  | 18.7  |
| <b>TOTAL</b>               | <b>130</b>   | <b>100.0</b>   | <b>385</b>  | <b>100.0</b>  |

### 6.1.2 Event evaluations

Most of the 14 events held by the Roots for Reconciliation project from January 2007 to July 2009 were evaluated using a simple evaluation form. Each form comprised a series of questions using what the organisers refer to as a 'close scale' (1 to 5) scoring system. The questions used in these evaluations cover practical arrangements, relevance of the content of the camp, leader's team, group dynamics / social time, individual participation level and the event in general. The scores are invariably high (rarely falling outside the 4 (good)-5 (excellent) range) which can be interpreted in two ways: the event was, indeed, excellent

or the questions were not probing enough to elicit useful feedback. As none of the questions specifically refer to the objectives of the event (perhaps because there were no specific written objectives) it is difficult now to get beyond a sense of the gratitude that participants expressed for being invited to participate. The questions asked, combined with the regional culture of politeness, may also have led participants to assume that their responses were more an assessment of the leaders/organisers than of the event itself. Cultural norms may therefore have led participants to avoid feedback which could be interpreted as impolite. This is also more likely as many participants have attended only one or two events and hence have not had an opportunity to compare events and make more measured judgments about the content and process of the events. The same comments, of course, may also be made of the interviews, questionnaire survey and testimonies conducted as part of this evaluation.

### 6.1.3 Questionnaire survey of participants

During the 'Framework Reunion' at Ureki, Georgia in July 2009, a subgroup of the assessment team designed a questionnaire to evaluate the opinion of the RfR participants regarding the project as well as the influence of the RfR project on their behaviour and feelings (see Appendix 5). In total, 77 participants completed a questionnaire from a total of 150 potential respondents. This represents a coverage of over 50% which is a significant achievement by the assessment team.

Of the 77 questionnaire respondents, 66.2% were female and 33.8% were male. 37 respondents were from Armenia, 22 from Nagorno Karabagh, 16 from Georgia and two from participants outside the region. 62 of the questionnaires were completed by volunteers, three by paid staff and twelve by people no longer actively involved in the YMCA. Between them, the 77 respondents attended 188 times at RfR events.

**Belonging** Respondents' mean score for how much they feel part of the RfR project was 4.2 out of a possible maximum of five, demonstrating a high level of identification with the project which is sustained even after participants leave the YMCA.

**YMCA values** The respondents considered that the project respected the four core values of the YMCA to a high degree. Out of a maximum of five, respondents scored responsibility at 4.7, honesty at 4.7, respect at 4.8 and care at 4.9. Respondents reported a high level of personal safety during project events (4.9 out of 5.0) suggesting that even in unfamiliar situations away from home, often in other countries and with strangers, the organisers created a very safe atmosphere.

**Cross-border relationships** Respondents were asked to think about relationships they had made with participants from other countries during the events. Not surprisingly, almost all of the respondents identified people from the two other countries within the region as those outside their own country that they kept in touch with most. For Armenians, there was an almost even split between Georgia (14) and Nagorno Karabagh (10); for Georgians they were more likely to keep in touch with Armenians (14) than those from Nagorno Karabagh (4) and those from Nagorno Karabagh were equally likely to maintain contact with Armenians (10) as Georgians (9). Only one respondent reported keeping in touch more with someone outside the region.

The most popular means of communicating with friends from other countries seems to be the internet (including Facebook and Odnoklassniki) (48) with SMS (37), email (22) phone (20) and Skype (15) also used. This is useful information regarding how best to communicate with the participants after and in between events. Indeed the project should consider setting up its own social network.

**Project leadership** Respondents were asked to identify from a list, seven words or phrases that describe the RfR leadership in their national movement. The top seven words were fun (61), responsible (58), organized (52), problem-solving (42), trustworthy (41), honest (39) and optimistic (35). The seven least used words were restricting (0), egoist (0), irresponsible (0), inflexible (0), boring (1), chaotic (1) and excluding (1). This suggests a very high level of positive regard for the skills, expertise and personal qualities of the leadership.

**Change and stability** Respondents were asked what they would like to see more of, the same of and less of in the project. Twenty suggestions were made concerning 'more of' and those with the highest scores were organized activities (10), expand the number of countries involved (7), cultural events (7), and the number of participants involved (7).

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Regarding things that respondents would like to see 'the same of' thirty different suggestions were made. The most commonly identified were participants (9), friendly atmosphere (7), organized leaders team (6), caring atmosphere (4) and productive, organized time (4). Fifteen suggestions were made for things that respondents would like to see 'less of' including unspecified difficulties and problems (5), being busy (3), free time (3) and passive participants (3).

**Feelings** When asked to describe three words or phrases that best described their feeling about the RfR project, participants came up with 72 suggestions. By far the most commonly used were *friendship* (28) and *fun* (21). Interestingly only two people mentioned *peace* and two *reconciliation*.

Table 6.4 summarises the mean responses of respondents to a set of statements about the RfR project. Note that for any mean score to be 4, all respondents would have to score 4 so it is likely that mean scores will always be higher than 1 and lower than 4.

| <b>Table 6.4: Mean scores of participants responding to the following statements</b>  |                                    |                       |                    |                                 |                             |
|---|------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|
|   | <b>1<br/>Strongly<br/>Disagree</b> | <b>2<br/>Disagree</b> | <b>3<br/>Agree</b> | <b>4<br/>Strongly<br/>Agree</b> | <b>0<br/>Don't<br/>Know</b> |
| a) The RfR project seriously promotes peace   |                                    |                       | 3.5                |                                 |                             |
| b) I feel that girls and boys were treated equally in the project                     |                                    |                       | 3.0                |                                 |                             |
| c) I became more tolerant as a result of being involved in the project                |                                    |                       | 3.2                |                                 |                             |
| d) I gained very little from the project  | 1.4                                |                       |                    |                                 |                             |
| e) The RfR project helped me become a stronger leader in my YMCA.                     |                                    |                       | 3.3                |                                 |                             |
| f) My opinion was not taken into consideration during project events.                 | 1.3                                |                       |                    |                                 |                             |
| g) I feel more Caucasian as a result of being involved in the project.                |                                    | 2.9                   |                    |                                 |                             |
| h) I am not clear what is the purpose of the RfR project.                             | 1.3                                |                       |                    |                                 |                             |
| i) I like to tell my friends and family stories about the project and its activities. |                                    |                       | 3.4                |                                 |                             |
| j) The activities provided did not corresponded to my interests.                      | 1.4                                |                       |                    |                                 |                             |
| k) The activities in the project took into account my specific needs as a man/woman.  |                                    |                       | 3.2                |                                 |                             |
| l) As a result of my experience I no longer want to be involved in the RfR project.   | 1.2                                |                       |                    |                                 |                             |
| m) We acted as a team in response to emergencies during the project activities.       |                                    |                       | 3.4                |                                 |                             |
| n) I felt like an outsider during the project events.                                 | 1.3                                |                       |                    |                                 |                             |

**Table 6.4: Mean scores of participants responding to the following statements**

|  | 1<br>Strongly<br>Disagree | 2<br>Disagree | 3<br>Agree | 4<br>Strongly<br>Agree | 0<br>Don't<br>Know |
|--|---------------------------|---------------|------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| o) I am very interested to remain involved in the RfR project in the future. |                           |               | 3.7        |                        |                    |

The scores suggest that, on average:

- a) there is a fairly strong belief that the RfR project seriously promotes peace
- b) participants feel that boys and girls were treated equally in the project but the average score demonstrates that this is not a strongly held view
- c) respondents believe they have gained from the project
- d) respondents believe that they gained from the project, but not strongly
- e) respondents believe they are better YMCA leaders as a result of the project
- f) the respondents believe their views were taken into account
- g) they don't feel more Caucasian
- h) they believe they are clear about the purpose of the project
- i) they like very much to tell friends and family about the project
- j) the RfR activities corresponded to respondents' interests
- k) the activities took into account their gender-related needs
- l) the respondents were motivated by their experience of the project
- m) the participants acted as a team to cope with emergencies
- n) people did not feel like outsiders
- o) respondents are enthusiastic to remain involved in the project in the future

The questionnaire responses from participants show a high level of support for the work of the project. Participants appear to have been affected by their participation in very positive and sometimes life-changing ways.

#### 6.1.4 Interviews with participants

Interviews were conducted with 39 participants of the Roots for Reconciliation events. The interview protocol was designed by a sub-group of the assessment team and tested at the 'Framework Reunion' at Ureki, Georgia in July 2009. Interview questions were made as open as possible to encourage discussion. The interviews were conducted in local languages and the notes translated into English. The relative inexperience of the assessment team members means that the notes from the interviews are very brief but it is a considerable achievement for the interviewers to have made 39 interviews available for analysis.

Interviewers and interviewees informally reported that the experience of reflecting on their own experience and hearing about others' views was very enlightening and created a greater sense of identity with the Roots for Reconciliation project.

In this section the responses to the questions are summarised. More detailed notes on the responses are available in a separate document.

Table 6.5 shows the gender and local YMCA of the participants interviewed. A total of 23 interviews were conducted with female interviewees and 16 with males.

|                                  | <b>Armenia</b>   | <b>Georgia</b>          | <b>Nagorno Karabagh</b>  |
|----------------------------------|--|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>Gender of interviewees</b>    | Female: 14<br>Male: 12   | Female: 7<br>Male: 4    | Female: 2<br>Male: 0     |
| <b>Local YMCA of interviewee</b> | Triangle: 1<br>Spitak: 8<br>Ozone: 4<br>Vardenis: 4<br>Yerevan: 2<br>Vanadzor: 7 | Telavi: 3<br>Tbilisi: 8 | State Theatre of Song: 2 |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                     | <b>26</b>  | <b>11</b>               | <b>2</b>                 |

**Motivation** Interviewees were asked about their motivation for participating in the Roots for Reconciliation project. Twenty different categories of response were given. Three reasons accounted for most of the responses. These were 'the experiencing and comparing nationalities and cultures (16), meeting new people (15) and learning about other YMCAs and their activities (13). A significant majority of the reasons given related to personal development. Only three people mentioned reasons related to peace and reconciliation.

**Expectations** When asked about whether the project had met their expectations, interviewees seem to be very satisfied with the project. A total of 23 stated that their expectations had been fully achieved, four stated that almost all their expectations had been achieved and a further four that the project had exceeded their expectations. Respondents made a number of comments to expand on their answers. Twelve stated that they had learned new ideas to make their local YMCA more active and interesting and five said they had made new friends. One person mentioned specifically that they had built partnerships with other YMCAs in the region.

**Relevance** Interviewees were asked 'whether the project, in their opinion offered activities which correspond with the reality and the living context of the different participants with their different backgrounds?' In retrospect this question was unclear and 'closed'. The responses show that the question was interpreted in a number of ways. 28 interviewees simply said 'yes'. Fifteen interviewees believed that the project had responded well to a diversity of participants backgrounds noting that there were no problems that arose that could not be resolved. Twelve other categories of response were made, including the following comments on the family feeling that was created (2), the good gender balance (2), the relevant focus on youth and their problems (2), feeling discomfort at the Kojori camp (2) and the absence of national symbols (2).

**Results** When asked about what they believed were the most important results of the project, the responses show that most participants mainly interpreted the question as a personal one. The most common response was making new friends and contacts (22) followed by exchanging experiences (7), gaining a broader understanding of other countries (7) and cultural exchange (especially dance and songs) (5). Two results concerning achievements that relate to organisational or national change were gaining knowledge, skills and responsibility for my YMCA (3) and creative and peaceful co-operation and understanding between the nationalities represented (3). It is noteworthy that only one person explicitly mentioned peace, which perhaps demonstrates a recognition that this scale of change is beyond the scope of a project working at a grassroots level, at least in the period under examination.

**Experience and skills gained** The experiences and skills that interviewees gained through the project fall under 17 categories. The most commonly mentioned were leadership skills (10), improved communication skills (8), interpersonal skills (7), an understanding of other cultures (7), confidence in unfamiliar surroundings (5), improved TenSing skills (4), new games (4), teamwork and groupwork (3). Only two people made



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reference to a skill related directly to peace and reconciliation, namely conflict resolution (2).

**Influence** The project appears to have had a profound effect at an individual level on interviewees. Their summarised responses are included in full in Table 6.6

| Response   | Armenia | Georgia | Nagorno Karabagh | TOTAL |
|--|---------|---------|------------------|-------|
| More confidence and improved ability to socialize                      | 6       | 2       | 1                | 9     |
| I am more tolerant   | 2       | 4       | 0                | 6     |
| I have an improved attitude to life in general                         | 5       | 0       | 0                | 5     |
| Helped me get rid of my complexes                                      | 4       | 0       | 0                | 4     |
| Importance of friendship   | 0       | 4       | 0                | 4     |
| I am more active   | 3       | 0       | 0                | 3     |
| No difference  | 3       | 0       | 0                | 3     |
| Greater sense of belonging nationally and regionally                   | 1       | 1       | 0                | 2     |
| I attach greater importance to honesty and respect                     | 2       | 0       | 0                | 2     |
| I have clearer ideas about the nature of leadership                    | 2       | 0       | 0                | 2     |
| I have fewer stereotypes   | 1       | 1       | 0                | 2     |
| Appreciate my religion and others' religions more                      | 0       | 0       | 1                | 1     |
| Greater concern for the problems of others                             | 1       | 0       | 0                | 1     |
| Greater value on freedom   | 0       | 1       | 0                | 1     |
| I am more optimistic   | 1       | 0       | 0                | 1     |
| I am more reliable   | 1       | 0       | 0                | 1     |
| I am more thoughtful   | 1       | 0       | 0                | 1     |
| I have fewer stereotypes   | 0       | 1       | 0                | 1     |
| I want peace   | 0       | 1       | 0                | 1     |
| Importance of helping refugees   | 0       | 1       | 0                | 1     |
| Importance of improved relationships between nations                   | 0       | 1       | 0                | 1     |
| Realisation that teenagers in different countries have a lot in common | 1       | 0       | 0                | 1     |
| Value of teamwork  | 0       | 0       | 1                | 1     |

**Change** About one third (14) of interviewees expressed satisfaction with RfR when asked what would they change about the project. The remainder came up with a valuable list of ideas but with no single idea dominating. Some wanted more events (5), better meals (3), improved conditions at camp (3), an increase in the number of participating countries (3), involving the same participants in all events (3), more careful selection of participants (3) and more time spent in the project (3), keep to the agreed agenda (2) and more group activities and games (2). A further ten single suggestions were made by individuals.

**Contribution** Asked 'how has the project enabled you to contribute your skills and abilities?' 19 participants explained that they could contribute in whatever way they wished and a further nine 'by sharing knowledge, experience and skills. No-one reported that they were not enabled to contribute. This suggests that whilst most participants feel that they can and are contributing, there is no clear direction of contribution that can be distilled from the answers given. This suggests that the project should be more proactive in engaging with the participants in order to agree practical and diverse ways in which everyone can participate in the work of the project.

**Sharing** Only one person reported that they had not shared their impressions of the project with others (mainly friends and family). 38 reported that they had shared their impressions – some of them with great enthusiasm. 26 interviewees reported that they had received a positive response from friends and family, two that the response was neither good nor bad. Two participants reported a negative response from an educational institution (the same educational institution was named in both cases).

Although few interviewees reported change in response from friends and families during the course of the project (mainly because their responses had been positive from the beginning), four interviewees reported that parents who had been concerned about them visiting other countries had been reassured and were happy to let their children travel with the project.

**Ideas for improvements** When asked to make concrete suggestions to the leadership of the RfR on how to improve the leadership of the Project and events, interviewees identified over 20 suggestions. Eleven participants said they could think of no suggestions. Those that did make suggestions came up with a wide range which can be categorised as: improve planning and decision-making concerning project events (12), expand and improve activities during events (8), involve more participants and more countries (6), improve follow-up with participants (2) and treat all participants equally (1).

**Participation in decision-making** Almost all of the interviewees expressed satisfaction about the ways in which they were able to make a valuable contribution into decision making. Nineteen felt that they always had an opportunity to express opinions (though not all specifically mentioned that their opinions influenced decisions). Four interviewees felt that no opportunity had been given and seven identified group activities as one of the points in the project where they were able to contribute to decision making. A further two mentioned TPDs and Programme Forums. The project would benefit from further discussion and planning regarding the question of how best to provide participants with meaningful opportunities for influencing decision-making.

**Impact on participants** It seems that many things will stay in the participants' memories after the project. By far the most common is the friendships (many of which are cross-border) that interviewees have made (21) though many other things were mentioned. Seven interviewees felt that everything was unforgettable, four mentioned the cultural exchange, the whole project (4), warmth and friendliness (4), fun (3), sight-seeing (3), interesting events (2) and new skills and knowledge gained (2). Nine other memorable aspects of the project were mentioned by individuals. The personal focus of almost all the responses reflects the focus of the project on individual development and relationship-building.

**Perception of project goal** The interviewees' answers to the question 'What do you think is the goal/objective of the project? How is the objective of the project for you personally?' demonstrates a range of views that reveal a need for further communication by the project about the complex nature of the project's model for bringing about change.

23 participants believe that the goal of the roots for reconciliation project is bringing participants from different nations together around shared ideas and friendship. Other responses were peace building (19), learn reconciliation (4), develop democracy (3), increase knowledge (3), cultural exchange (2) and develop leaders (2). Twelve individuals each gave a further twelve responses which are listed here to show the diverse understandings about the project and what it was aiming to achieve: demonstrate equality, develop ideas for new projects, empower young people, exchange political experience, honesty, increase mutual understanding, respect, reveal human qualities, teach about responsibility, teamwork, travel, use resources well.

Overall, the participant interview responses paint a very positive picture of individuals' experiences of participating in the Roots for Reconciliation project events.

### 6.1.5 Testimonies from participants

Assessment team members were asked to contribute or gather testimonies – free form written statements about their experience of the Roots for Reconciliation project. In all, thirteen testimonies were presented. They represent a non-statistical sample of views and are more likely to have been written by participants who are highly motivated and engaged with the project. Nonetheless, the views expressed in the testimonies are genuine and heartfelt expressions of the profound effects that the RfR project has had on thirteen young lives. The testimonies - written in or translated into English - speak more eloquently than a summary ever could. For this reason lengthy quotations from ten of the testimonies are included as Box 6.1.

#### **Box 6.1: Excerpts from Participant Testimonies**

"I would like such events to take place more often in our country or elsewhere in the world, because they establish peace on earth." Female Participant, Armenia

"I want to mention 'roots for reconciliation' that gave me more than I can imagine before taking part in the programs. After each reunion I realized that only in peace and friendly condition it's possible to build stable relations ... Thanks to this project ... new skills of leader take roots in me, I [have] become more responsible, optimistic." Female Participant, Armenia

"Some of us had a chance to have our input in helping refugee children in Gori. We were ready to do our best to be in help and to see a smile in the eyes of children who didn't understand what had happened and why they had to leave their houses and live in tents. It was really an exciting moment for all our delegation... I can't find right word to express all my feelings about this great Project. It is more than an ordinary project. It had changed me so much that I can feel it myself. I become stronger, more smart and tolerant, began to understand the world better. I gained many experience and skills in many fields which will help me in my life. I am sure of it. I made many friends and relationships. And the most important that this Project gave a chance to Caucasian people to become more peaceful and we established good relationships." Female Participant, Armenia

"It's really one of the best periods in my life. These three years in this project I get so much that many people won't be able to get in their whole life. I even don't know how to explain my feelings about this project and its events. There is so much to tell, so many emotions, feelings, stories, memories, people and events ... You don't understand the meaning of the word "war" when you don't see it and its results with your own eyes. And we went to see it. We were in Tbilisi and Gori only two months later after the war. We met with the refugee children and their parents. We worked with them and understand the real meaning of war how horrible it can be. People's lives were changed in few minutes; they lost their houses and become refugees. And I heard stories about how parents were afraid of toy guns or bombs. After seeing these all, of course, I want to live in peaceful region and peaceful world ... As to me I would like this project to go on and on and never end because it did really very good things and still has a lot to do. I would like to see more and more participants from other countries and one day maybe from the whole world. And I would like to finish with words of Stefan Zweig who said: "*If you want peace - prepare it, prepare, without sparing the forces, every day of your life, each hour of your days*". I think this is the thing that we did, do and hopefully are going to do." Female participant, Armenia

"Project gave us chance to do many different activities that would provide us to be near and close to each other. We did common job, we played games together, we sang, danced with

each other and what is the most important – we talked to each other. It was crucial to find out that all of us tried to speak about the problems but in the most diplomatic ways. It meant that we care for each other and do our best not to harm our relations and take care of them like ... babies ... I was already afraid to build relations with Russians ... but I did. Do you know why? Because RfR has “made” me to do that. I said every day: Its funny, I don't know what magic do they use, but this project works, it reaches its goals, well done, Good job Good job!” Male Participant, Georgia

I ‘developed’ in the project via communicating and dealing with various people. I discussed problems concerning the youth with people from Armenia and Georgia. It helped us and made us closer. I became wiser. It was important for me to realize that if my friend from YMCA was fine, I automatically feel myself the same way ... It is often said in Karabakh that our generation has had no childhood as a result of reasons which are well known to everybody. I agree with it somehow. I could see childish happiness in the eyes of the people of my age during the project activities of this project. Comparing them before and after their participation in the project, I found kindness deep inside their hearts ... They felt deep responsibility and learned that it was their own project as well and the project needed something from each of the participants. I can't say that everything was fine and extraordinary, as far as that is a rare case. Every problem and unexpected situation was taken under control immediately and was solved by the coordinators. I felt care and trust all the time. This project has very kind roots. It made us more patriotic. Learning another nation's traditions and customs, we began to respect and accept them, as they were. I'd like to send my greatest and deepest regards to every leader, organizer, participant and the donors of this project.” Female Participant, Nagorno Karabagh

“The project “Roots for Reconciliation” gave and continues to give me chance to gain knowledge about the character and traditions of Georgia's neighboring countries. The name of the project initially makes me wish to get more closer and have stronger relations with peoples living in Caucasus region ... Being a representative of Georgian nation [during] this project was a big responsibility to me, as I wanted to show the best sides of Georgian heart and soul while being guest and especially while hosting events. With help of RfR I gained not just new contacts but new real friends in Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh. RfR left many sweet memories to me and also showed me to care for the peoples of neighboring countries and treat them like own family members, that their pain is my pain and their pleasure is my pleasure and vice versa and these everything is a prerequisite of peace and security, having warmer relations in this region ... Before starting in the project I was a little bit concerned because I was a bit afraid that I could have some problems relating with different religions, but the picture was absolutely different. And me, as son of Caucasus I feel I'm more rich, self-confident and proud that near me I have friends and neighbors with different religion and I don't feel that's an obstacle any more. RfR project made me more tolerant. When now I meet with my good friends from Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh I feel like family meeting.” Male Participant, Georgia

“Due to my participation in this project I got quite a new and fresh worldview, I learnt a lot of new things about the life in general; I learnt a lot of important things for my work at the YMCA- new games, songs, dances, etc. To cut it short, I had an unforgettable and interesting time which will always be full of bright colours in my memory. I always remember those days with a big smile ... I think everyone will agree that the RfR project changes peoples' lives and these people in their

turn have some small investments in the realization of the project ... I want to thank the RfR project simply because it exists and gives the young people the opportunity to come together to share their knowledge and experience and to enjoy themselves." Female Participant, Armenia

"The most important result of the project is that we gained many friends and learned much from each other. In my life there were important and positive changes and one of them was participation in the RfR project where we gained many skills and experiences which I think will be useful during other projects ... [The name] Roots for Reconciliation itself inform us the project's essential purpose –that is protection of peace and solidarity in our planet." Female Participant, Armenia

"I am one of the representatives of the generation which lost a part of their lives. I am one of those who lost their childhood. Thanks to the YMCA in general I managed to overcome almost all the complexes I had as a personality in general and I had many of them formed in the result of the tragedy mentioned above. I appeared in the YMCA quite by chance 5 years ago and now I cannot imagine my life without these 4 letters any more. I am sure everyone appearing in any event organized by the YMCA has this feeling. And this is due to the RfR project too as I participated in most of the reunions. This changed my whole life. I am and will always be grateful to this organization the rest of my life. The letters YMCA are only associated with kindness, care and happiness for me. I want to assure you that such projects as the RfR project are necessary for our children today as all the programs are aimed at making their lives interesting and happy, full of events which will become sweet memories in future. They are also for the young leaders of my age and not only who I am sure will get what they did not have the chance to have in their childhood. Every generation suffers in its way and people always stay young at all the ages. The YMCA also gives these young people the opportunity to fill the gap left in their lives which was actually not their or their parents' fault. It was the historical circumstances and their destiny perhaps. That's life. The YMCA movement has a mission to make people happy and it is realized through such projects." Female Participant, Armenia

## 6.2 Leaders of Local YMCAs

Ten local YMCA leaders (four from Armenia, three from Georgia and three from Nagorno Karabagh) were interviewed by members of the Assessment Team. Equal numbers of male and female leaders were interviewed. Their responses are summarised in this section.

**Involvement** A range of reasons were given for becoming involved in the RfR project. The most commonly mentioned reason was the organisational development of the local YMCA with 4 responses. Other reasons included making new friendships (2), learning about other YMCAs (2) and developing partnerships (1).

**Programming** Eight out of ten respondents felt that the project was well programmed with one respondent mentioning that the leaders developed the necessary skills for programming over time and another that the project was a good example of partnership and cooperation.

**Selection criteria** The main criteria used to select participants for RfR events by six respondents were that the participants must be active and motivated volunteers or members.

**Decision making** Six out of ten respondents reported that they had opportunities to participate in decision making. Their varied responses suggest that participation in decision-making is an area that needs to be strengthened in the future development of the project.

**Promotional activities** Promoting the project seems to have been focused mainly on immediate friends and family of participants (4) and internally with the Board, staff, volunteers and members of the YMCA (6). Only one respondent mentioned promoting the project to the wider community.

**Cooperation** Regarding national-local co-operation, six respondents reported that this was 'very effective' and three that it was 'quite effective'.

**Cross-border co-operation** In the view of the respondents, cross-border co-operation between local YMCAs seems to have been an important achievement of the project. The main reason cited for this was the good inter-personal relationships established.

**Results** Asked about the most important results of the project, the respondent gave a range of answers. Four mentioned stronger relationships between local YMCAs. Other results were cultural exchange (3), friendships (3), strengthened capacity of local YMCAs (2) and well-trained camp leaders (2). Interestingly, only two respondents mentioned the Community Resource Centres as a lasting legacy.

**Leadership skills** Respondents noted a range of ways in which the skills of leaders attending the RfR events are strengthened: better planning (3) greater confidence (3) and greater sociability, flexibility and responsibility (2) were those most mentioned most.

**Impact** Stronger leaders were identified as the main effect of the project on the local YMCAs but only by three respondents. Others mentioned good co-operation (2), a stronger camping programme (2) and a growth in volunteers (2). Single respondents referred to new knowledge and skills, stronger teamwork and programme development. One respondent referred to the reconstruction of their camp and the fulfilment of the strategic plan.

**Suggestions** When asked how they would change the project, the most frequent suggestion was expanding the number of countries participating (3) with one making specific reference to involving Azeri participants despite the difficulties, organising more educational projects (2) more time at camps (2). A number of other single suggestions were made by respondents. The suggestions made referred to the nature of the events and the experience of attending events. None of the suggestions refer to wider issues of strengthening impact or improving sustainability.

**Expectations** Five respondents reported that their expectations had been completely met and three that their expectations had been exceeded. A further three felt that their expectations had been partly met with one of those three reporting that some expectations had been fully met whilst others were partly met.

**Future development** Six respondents wish to see the project continue and three would like to expand the reach of the project to include more countries. Two respondents would like more young people involved and a further two hoped to see more camping organised cross-border on a local-local basis.

**Use of resources** Eight of the respondents believed that the resources were used effectively and two 'mainly effectively'.

**Improving leadership** This question was responded in different ways by the respondents. Most of the suggestions concern improving the project: involving more participants (4), holding reunions more often (3), involving more countries (2) and expanding the range of activities (1). Other suggestions focusing on the leadership were to continue as present (3), continue to develop personal and professional skills (1), involve participants and local YMCAs more in decision-making (1), increase technical support to local YMCAs (1), ensure that criteria for selecting participants are based on the aim of the project (1).

**Objective of project** The wide range of responses to the question about the objective of the project is understandable given the project's diverse ambitions. There was no agreed understanding of the objectives but the responses can be broadly divided under two main categories: inward-facing (ie YMCA) and outward-facing. Under the 'inward-facing' category respondents identified as the main objectives strengthening YMCA organisations (3), developing strong leaders (2), developing co-operation between local YMCAs (1) and developing democracy in the YMCA (1). Under the 'outward-facing' category respondents identified building peace (3), culture exchange (3), bringing young people together (2), building friendship between countries (2), breaking down stereotypes (1), enabling young

people to use their abilities (1), increasing young people's civic participation (1), learning about the problems in the region (1), strengthening the roots for reconciliation (1) and developing democracy in the country and region (1). The diverse responses may reflect an identity problem for the project within YMCA that would be a problem in the wider world if the project was better known than it is.

**In order to respect agreements on confidentiality, not all of the interview data in the following sections are reported in detail. The data has, of course, been influential in the thinking behind the analysis and recommendations.**

### 6.3 RfR National Coordinators

Interviews with the three National Coordinators for the project were conducted by the Framework consultant. The interviews were semi-structured and lasted approximately 90 minutes. The interviews revealed a sense of achievement about the Roots for Reconciliation project, balanced by a recognition of the challenges ahead – particularly concerning how best to sustain the benefits.

In Nagorno Karabagh the Roots for Reconciliation funding provides 100% of the budget and accounts for 80% of the work done by the YMCA (the remaining 20% is carried out on a voluntary basis). According to the project's National Coordinator, the politically sensitive status of Nagorno Karabagh makes it difficult for the YMCA there to attract international funding so the RfR project funding has been solely responsible for the YMCA being able to develop a well-recognised presence there. Indeed, YMCA Artsakh has in 2007 and 2009 been presented awards by the Speaker and Prime Minister of the government for their exemplary co-operation as an 'active youth organisation'. However, despite this recognition, the YMCA is unable to look to the government for financial support in the future due to the government's very limited budget.

The opportunity to host three Regional events was seen as both a great honour and responsibility for the fledgling movement. YMCA Artsakh learned from their experience and the young leaders of YMCA Artsakh have become "more confident and professional" as a result of their exposure to the RfR project. In the view of the National Coordinator, meeting people from across the Region has changed the lives of the members of the YMCA in Nagorno Karabagh in positive ways.

One of the significant contributions of the RfR project for the YMCA in Nagorno Karabagh has been the purchase of a piece of land that will be used for camping and other activities. Until a centre is built there, the YMCA has rented an office which has been renovated (in lieu of rent) and is now being used as a resource centre and venue for activities.

The Roots for Reconciliation National Coordinator in Armenia had been involved in the YMCA for many years before taking on his role with the project. In his view the project has had a very valuable impact on the development of the YMCA in Armenia. It has provided new possibilities by encouraging cross-border working and strengthening in-country relationships and this has strengthened the YMCA at both local and national levels. The project events have had a significant effect on the lives of the participants in the view of the National Coordinator. He has seen evidence of the young people broadening their horizons through travel, meeting people and developing new friendships, developing new ways of seeing the world, strengthening their sense of pride and self confidence and becoming open to new ideas. The project has also developed the planning and organising capacity of the young leaders, strengthened mutual understanding, encouraged co-operation and provided valuable financial resources. In the view of the National Coordinator it is important that all the local YMCAs feel equally involved in the project and this has been difficult to achieve because RfR events have been hosted mainly by a small number of local YMCAs. He would like to see more opportunities for 'bottom-up' planning.

The National Coordinator in Georgia believes that one of the main achievements of the Roots for Reconciliation project has been to strengthen the national YMCA movement in Georgia by facilitating cooperation between leaders of the local YMCAs and the national YMCA. Another achievement has been to develop the cultural awareness and leadership skills of the young people. This has created a cadre of young people who have shown that they can arrange events (including cross-border events between local YMCAs) and mobilise resources. However, sometimes not being able to foresee who will participate in the

project events has made it difficult to achieve some of the intended objectives. Having clearer selection criteria for participation would be helpful.

The YMCA has a perennial problem of young leaders leaving the organisation but the RfR project has helped to motivate and retain them by providing opportunities for cross-border cooperation that, in the National Coordinator's words "destroys stereotypes". Through his involvement in 'Do No Harm' training provided through EED the Georgia National Coordinator has developed professionally in ways that have contributed to the development of the YMCA in the Region.

Looking to the future, he is enthusiastic about the opportunities that the Community Resource Centre will create for bringing people together and for generating income.

#### 6.4 YMCA Europe

Interviews were held with four staff members and one Board member of YMCA Europe: Michal Szymanczak, Deputy Secretary General; Vardan Hambardzumyan, Regional Development Secretary and RfR Regional Programme Coordinator, Mikhail Guskov, Regional Development Secretary for Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova; Radek Hlavsa, Marketing and Communication Officer and Olga Lukina, Assessor.

The responses of these interviewees have helped to shape the assessment, and reference is made to their analysis of the project throughout this report. What follows are some of the key messages that emerged during the interviews.

Michal Szymanczak Deputy Secretary General of YMCA Europe explained the origins of the Roots for Reconciliation project and its roots in the 'Catch the Vision' series of conferences held in Jerusalem, Kosovo, Albania and Armenia. In the YMCA, two main models of work on peace and reconciliation have evolved. The first has a focus on advocacy and the second, which is favoured by YMCA Europe involves "getting to know people and putting down roots". This favoured method is consistent with the 'begleitung' approach of grass-roots accompaniment that was developed by the, then, European Alliance of YMCAs.

Michal Szymanczak emphasised how important is the role of the Roots for Reconciliation project in creating more self-sustaining YMCA movements in the Region. In his view, the Roots for Reconciliation project is an exemplary project in many ways. Through the project, three YMCA movements have themselves become stronger and close links have been made between them. This is an important contribution to strengthening Civil Society.

The process followed by the project has been crucial to its success and was summarized as "being modest, not using big words, not being on the front pages of newspapers" but building relationships across the Region that might otherwise have been thought impossible. Importantly, the project has built on the YMCA movement's strengths. For Michal Szymanczak, "the Roots for Reconciliation project shows what it means to be a Christian".

Mikhail Guskov, Regional Development Secretary for Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova explained that a good basis of co-operation had been established between YMCA Russia and the YMCAs in the Region. In his view the RfR project was a very important tool for renovating inter-personal and inter-organisational relationships and creating new links. One example was the link created with the children from Beslan School Number One in South Ossetia. Another achievement has been the ability to sustain a relationship between the YMCAs in Georgia and Russia following the war in 2008. For Misha Guskov this shows the ability of the RfR project to work effectively even in politically sensitive situations by using YMCA methodologies.

Being involved in the Roots for Reconciliation project is "the highlight of my work" in the words of Radek Hlavsa, Marketing and Communication Officer for YMCA Europe. It has provided him with the opportunity to experience what YMCA refers to as the 'blue music' (the real face-to-face activities of the organisation) when he is normally involved in the 'grey music' (the essential but uninspiring administration that goes on behind the scenes). Radek characterizes the project as "empowering, challenging, cross-border, experience-sharing and transparent".

The interview with YMCA Europe Board member and Assessor Olga Lukina though brief was, nevertheless, enlightening. Visiting the ProFest event in Armenia as someone from outside the Region she commented on the contrast between the mass media explanations of conflict and the reality of seeing young people from countries in conflict sharing their



experiences and seeking things in common. Recognising the limits of what can be achieved by one project she commented that the Roots for Reconciliation project is "a very important drop in the ocean. If many people come through this programme there will be changes."

## 6.5 Other YMCAs

Tom Valentine, Senior Associate Director, International Group, YMCA of the USA has a long and supportive history with the Roots for Reconciliation project. He is a member of the Field Group for YMCA of Georgia, worked on the scoping study for the project and has been closely involved with the project throughout its life. He commented on the very close partnership between YMCA of the USA and YMCA Europe concerning the countries of the former Soviet Union. YMCA of the USA is a major supporter of the RfR project including \$150,000 for the Pambak Community Resource Centre and \$20,000 for the Daranak CRC. YMCA of the USA has also provided other sources of support such as funding for the delegations from YMCA Russia and YMCA of the USA at the ProFest in Armenia. The main purpose of the YMCA of the USA support is to build leadership and self-reliance so the RfR project objectives are very closely aligned with Y-USA's priorities.

Tom Valentine described the RfR project as being "built on best practices from all over the world". He believes that one of the project's biggest strengths is that it is not simply a youth program but also addresses movement strengthening. He strongly believes that this combination of institutional development, leadership development and programme development (especially through camping) makes for an impactful project design.

Tom Valentine is very enthusiastic about the cross-border work of the project which he describes as inspiring, with "amazing levels of collaboration" between members of the YMCA family. He believes that the project's ability to bring together Russian and Georgian YMCA members is a "profound exciting development". He characterises the peace and reconciliation work of the project as aiming to build cross-cultural understanding between young people and this has been successfully achieved through the work of the project. He believes the project has also succeeded in strengthening the capacity of the national YMCAs in the Region so that they are now "elevated to a new level of opportunity".

Sustaining the achievements of the Roots for Reconciliation project will require strong systems for governance, finance and strategy. Making the best use of the CRCs (which potentially represent the best facilities of any YMCA in Eastern Europe), will require good business-planning, marketing and core management skills.

Tom Valentine believes the model developed by the Roots for Reconciliation project with its focus on bringing people together through practical programmes such as camping (rather than simply discussing the conflicts) is one that could be strengthened and scaled up in other parts of the world. In conclusion, he placed the Roots for Reconciliation project as one of the top two or three initiatives he has come across in the YMCA internationally.

During the ProFest in Armenia, a small group of participants from the YMCA of the USA delegation convened to share their views of the Roots for Reconciliation project. Their comments are about their experience of the ProFest gathering organised under the auspices of the RfR project. What they had to say was unanimously positive and deeply personal. Their views capture the spirit of the event and speak for themselves:

"I was moved and inspired even after one day", "It puts my values back into my programmes", "It has been a deeply spiritual experience building relationships with others and with God", "The group is amazing", "It is humbling to come from an active programming model - here you see the heart of the work. It is recharging me to do more", "It is team building on steroids!", "I'm enjoying the fact that I can't understand how it has come together. There is a real spiritual component working here", "We're heading in the right direction. Having our own reconciliation with God before reconciling with each other", "It has put Miracle-Gro on the roots we already had", "God is reconciling us through Jesus Christ", "This is [real] service".

## 6.6 International Partners

Interviews were held with Ms Ilonka Boltze, Program Officer for EED (by phone), Ms Caroline Cruckow, EED Program Officer for project until April 2008 (by phone) and Nele De Meyer, Coordinator of the EED Dialogue and Support Office for South Caucasus (in person and by phone). A request was made for an interview with ICCO but due to staff changes

this was not possible. ICCO offered to provide written answers to questions provided by the evaluator but, unfortunately, these were not forthcoming.

Ms Ilonke Boltze is the third EED representative to work closely with the Roots for Reconciliation project during its three year history. Her willingness to be interviewed is particularly appreciated as she had only recently taken over the program responsibility and therefore had limited experience of the project's work.

The EED Dialogue and Support office provides capacity building and organisational development support to EED's partners in South Caucasus. Nele De Meyer has been supporting the YMCA RfR project since its early days. She has been involved in regular in-depth discussions with the project leadership and has built up a 'first-hand' understanding of the project by attending many of the project events. Nele De Meyer was also instrumental in introducing the project to the 'Do No Harm' approach.

The RfR project is seen by those interviewed in EED as currently a grass-roots project that focuses on individual change and relationship-building as means of peace-building and conflict prevention. The individual change and relationship-building approaches were acknowledged as important strategies for the early development of the project. These approaches led to the project's focus on organising cross-border events which have brought about significant outcomes for many of the participants. There is now a hope that the project will consider broadening its range of approaches by, for example, strengthening the public profile of the YMCA in the Region as a democratic social institution that explicitly promotes peace and actively works to promote tolerance. It was pointed out that this would require the national YMCAs to work closely with each other and to strengthen relationships with other organisations.

Those interviewed explained that the cross-border events organised by the project - whilst providing a valuable way of bringing young people together across cultural divides - currently have a rather narrow focus mainly on cultural exchange. Consideration could be given to broadening the focus of the project events to include other issues faced by (and identified by) young people across the Region: for example, employment, gender and environment issues. In this way there could be a broader educational dimension to the camps and other project activities whilst the cross-border element would ensure that peace-building remained on the agenda.

Comments were also raised about the importance of ensuring that the attendance of individual participants at project events was followed up by the project and the local YMCAs. This would help to ensure a more explicit focus on YMCA leadership-development and movement strengthening. Strengthening the peace-building component could be reinforced by encouraging and supporting local YMCAs to mainstream the RfR principles and approaches in their existing programmes. The young people who have participated in the RfR project events, it was suggested, could be more of a resource in their local YMCAs. For example, they could be more actively involved in helping other young people in their local YMCAs to develop *their* conflict sensitivity and commitment to practical peace-building. Integrating the RfR project's approaches to peace-building in these ways could help to extend and sustain the project's impact in the national YMCA movements.

It was explained that, from its early days, the RfR project has been given the opportunity to work flexibly in recognition of the project's challenging environment. This has had both positive and negative consequences for the project's pace of development. Concerns were raised about the delays in constructing and opening the Community Resource Centres and how this has affected the ability of the project to implement its plans concerning community involvement and developing camping activities. There was a strongly expressed view that the project should use its additional year of funding to ensure the completion of the CRCs and use these centres to strengthen the sustainability of the work of the YMCAs in the Region.

Summarising the views of the EED staff about the Roots for Reconciliation project, there is a recognition of significant achievements balanced by some important concerns and a sense of yet-to-be-achieved potential.

## 7. Assessment Findings

This section addresses the questions identified in the Terms of Reference for the assessment. The findings are categorised under the headings relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, flexibility, gender, impact, sustainability and transparency & accountability.

### 7.1 Relevance

#### 7.1.1 What model of reconciliation has been used to guide the project design?

*Reconciliation: A process that attempts to transform intense or lingering malevolence among parties previously engaged in a conflict or dispute into feelings of acceptance and even forgiveness of past animosities or detrimental acts.*

Although not explicitly stated, the Roots for Reconciliation project is based on a 'theory of change' that combines what Church and Rogers (2006)<sup>4</sup> describe as the 'Individual Change' and 'Healthy Relationships and Connections' theories of peace-building. The 'Individual Change' theory assumes that peace comes through '*transformative change of a critical mass of individuals, their consciousness, attitudes, behaviour and skills. The methods commonly used focus on investing in individual change through training, personal transformation/consciousness raising workshops; relationship-building processes; dialogues and encounter groups and trauma healing*'.

The 'healthy relationships and connections' theory assumes that peace emerges '*out of a process of breaking down isolation, polarization, prejudice and stereotypes between/among groups*' and that '*strong relationships are a necessary ingredient for peace-building. The methods used focus on processes of inter-group dialogue, networking, relationship-building processes; joint efforts and practical programs on substantive problems*'.

As the project evolved it has consciously and explicitly adopted the 'Do No Harm' approach. 'Do No Harm' is more a way of expressing a project's values and principles than a statement of objectives. The 'Do No Harm' focus on understanding the context of conflict and then identifying what divides and connects the parties involved is particularly well-suited to the Roots for Reconciliation goal, objectives and methodology.

Another important aspect of the project's programme theory is the importance it places on camping as a proven way of developing relationships between young people. This commitment to camping is strongly influenced by the experience of the YMCA of the US where camping has been a successful component of the organisation's work for many decades.

In addition, there is an important focus in the RfR project based on developing the YMCAs in the region as democratic movements with the intention that "the YMCAs ... will support the democratization and democratic coherence in these countries [of the southern Caucasus]<sup>5</sup>"

#### 7.1.2 What were the consequences of the choice of this model?

By choosing 'individual change' and 'healthy relationships and connections' theories the project focused on providing opportunities for the growth and development of individuals from the local YMCAs in the region. In addition the project also created opportunities for bringing together groups of young people in cross-border events aimed at building relationships and challenging stereotypes. This rationale for the Roots for Reconciliation project is summarised in Table 7.1.

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<sup>4</sup> Church, Cheyanne and Mark M. Rogers (2006) DESIGNING FOR RESULTS: Integrating Monitoring and Evaluation in Conflict Transformation Programs, US: Search for Common Ground

<sup>5</sup> Interview with Vardan Hambardzumyan for Welt Sichten magazine (August 2009)

| <b>Table 7.1: The rationale of the Roots for Reconciliation 'model of change'</b> |   |   |
|---|---|---|
|   | <b>'Reunions' Component</b>   | <b>'Support Measures' Component</b>   |
| <b>'Individual change'</b>  | Build self-understanding, tolerance, cross-cultural awareness, and personal visions for the future based on peace.  | Training on leadership development and camp programming leads to personal development of project participants strengthened capacity of their local and national YMCAs and benefits the wider communities to which they belong |
| <b>'Healthy relationships and connections'</b>                                    | Provide well-planned and safe opportunities for young people from countries and regions in conflict to meet and build long-term relationships and mutual understanding which will form the basis of further co-operation in the future. | TPDs and Programme Forum meetings bring together participants from across the region to plan, reflect and learn together.   |

Emphasising the importance of camping in the RfR programme had very far-reaching consequences for the project design. First of all it provided a rationale for the development of Community Resource Centres as venues for camps which are a vehicle for bringing young people together.

**7.1.3 What analysis was done of the need and context before planning the project?**

The analysis carried out at the project planning stage was largely based on the experience of the EAY/ICCO regional initiative on institutional and leadership capacity building and the development of cross-border co-operation between the YMCAs of Armenia and Georgia (1997-2004). By reflecting on this and the organisation of a subsequent initiative focusing on programme development (2004-2006) as well as wide consultation within the international YMCA movement, the EAY built a general understanding of the needs and opportunities for combining peace-building and YMCA movement strengthening in the Region. It is fair to say that this analysis was based more on qualitative experience than on a rigorous, quantitative situation analysis.

**7.1.4 How effectively did the planning process examine good practices from other similar projects?**

The roots of the Roots for Reconciliation project are deeply linked to the history of the European Alliance of YMCAs. The project name originated from the YMCA Europe 'Catch the Vision' series of conferences that first used the term 'Spiritual Roots for Reconciliation'.

YMCA Europe learned from the YMCA 'Catch the Vision' experience in Palestine where a more advocacy-focused approach to peace building and conflict resolution was used but with limited success. A decision was made to take a more modest, low key, grassroots-focused and long-term approach in the south Caucasus. In the view of Tom Valentine (YMCA-US) the RfR project is built on YMCA best practices from all over the world and aims to put into practice the themes identified in the World YMCA Global Operating Plan for Georgia and the EAY initiative for Armenia (2004-6).

There is only limited evidence that the planning process looked beyond the YMCA experience for good practices in peace and reconciliation that might have been useful to guide the design of the project. This is partly explained by the absence of other projects that could be copied according to the project's Regional Coordinator. It is also symptomatic of a generally inward focus in the YMCA as an international organisation. However, the project design did benefit significantly from the ideas and experience of the program officers from ICCO (Zwaantje van't Veer) and EED (Caroline Cruckow) who were involved in the early stages of project planning and development.

**7.1.5 To what extent was the project well-designed?**

It is important to comment at this point on the logframe that provides the logical framework of the project design. A logical framework should demonstrate clearly how inputs (resources) are used through activities to create outputs leading to outcomes and,

ultimately, to impact. The test of a good logical framework is that there are clear, logical links between the overall goal of the project, its objectives, results, activities and resources. In other words, it should be possible to see the cause and effect relationships between the activities, outputs, outcome and the impact. It should also be possible to see how the achievement of the outputs realistically lead to the achievement of the outcomes. Finally, it should be possible to monitor and evaluate the project outputs and outcomes by using identified indicators in the logframe to compare the situation at the beginning of the project (baseline) with the situation at an identified point during implementation or after completion of the project.

The reality is that most logframes rarely achieve these standards because in complex working environments the lack of predictability makes it impossible to identify simple, linear cause-effect relationships. The reality is more commonly a complex web of causation. This is also true of the Roots for Reconciliation project experience.

The RfR project design is summarised in the project logframe<sup>6</sup>. In this document, the developmental goal for the project is described as: 'Strengthening and extension of the YMCA Movement in South Caucasus, as a mass-membership, ecumenical network standing for integrity of creation, peace and justice'. So in the developmental goal, peace and justice are seen as important descriptors of the YMCA movement but achieving them is not seen as a goal in itself. Indeed, the main goal appears to be strengthening the YMCA movement in South Caucasus.

The three objectives of the project describe how the development goal is addressed in practical terms. In the logframe the objectives are:

- To further open up the YMCA services to youth in marginalized groups and communities in various parts of the region, with this empowering them to mobilization and action out of their own strength and in their own responsibility:
- To use the YMCA network and capacities for providing the youth in those groups and communities with obtainable educated tools for basic participation, through this asserting their political, civil, economic, social and cultural rights:
- To offer the YMCA setting to those young people across Caucasus to meet and to create relations and networks as a basis for further cross-border cooperation, intercultural dialogue, with this building confidence between various conflicting sides in the region and promoting peace.

These objectives show that the main focus of the RfR project was intended to be youth in marginalized groups and communities in various parts of the region and the main methods would be providing educational opportunities and opportunities to meet for intercultural dialogue and peace-building.

These objectives do not make explicit reference to developing Community Resource Centres but the indicators for measuring the achievement of the objectives all focus on the development of these centres. The effect of this is to undervalue the importance of the other RfR project components, ie reunions and training and support measures as means of achieving the outcomes of personal development, capacity-development and movement-strengthening.

Nevertheless, the RfR project demonstrates a well-grounded understanding of the challenges and possibilities of working for peace and reconciliation with young people in the southern Caucasus region. The project is sufficiently challenging in its ambitions to motivate the engagement of individuals and organisations whilst also being realistic about the difficulties of bringing about long-term change in such a sensitive area as peace and reconciliation. The project's model of development builds on the organisational strengths of the YMCA and provides a strong foundation on which to work towards its longer-term and more ambitious goals.

From the perspective of the YMCA International, one of the biggest strengths of the RfR project is that it combines a youth programme with a movement strengthening process. The Community Resource Centre concept that forms part of the project recognises the dual importance of camping as a way of bringing young people together and as a means of

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<sup>6</sup> 'Generation Next for Peace and Justice (EAY Programme for Caucasus 07-09) Logframe'

securing a sustainable income stream that is crucial to the future of the national YMCA movements in the Region.

One of the project's major strengths – structuring the project so that it is implemented by the national YMCA movements - has also been the source of significant challenges. For example, it has been necessary to invest significant resources on building the capacity of the national YMCA movements so that they can play their part in the implementation of the project. This has placed considerable responsibilities on the Regional Project Coordinator.

A further challenge brought about by the project design is dealing with the complex relationships between the national YMCA secretariat and the local YMCAs. The project works through the national YMCA secretariats but, of course, relies on the support and co-operation of the local YMCAs. When relationships between national and local YMCAs are positive and constructive, the project benefits from that. However, when relationships between national and local YMCAs are problematic (as has been the case on a number of instances) the RfR project leadership can be placed in a difficult position. This is particularly relevant for the National Coordinators of the project who hold official positions in the national YMCA secretariats. That the difficulties have been overcome says much about the shared commitment to the project's long-term success and the willingness to find agreed solutions.

#### 7.1.6 How well-defined were the outcomes?

The project logframe identifies intended activities and outputs but it is not clear what outcomes and impact they are intended to achieve. In other words, the logical connection between the development goal and main objectives on the one hand and the planned activities and outputs on the other hand is difficult to follow. What is needed is greater clarity of purpose under each of the three objectives with some specific indicators for measuring progress in achieving the peace and reconciliation and movement strengthening objectives of the project.

At this stage, one possible measure of the peace and reconciliation work of the project can be the participants' willingness to extend the reconciliation work to involve young people from Azerbaijan and Turkey. This would represent a challenging test of the robustness of the RfR model and the maturity of the participants.

#### 7.1.7 To what extent do the activities and programme goals reflect the needs and context of the target communities?

The activities and programme goals are relevant to many of those targeted by the project but further work is needed to ensure that the local communities around the CRCs are served by the Centres. For this to happen, detailed surveys of the needs of the communities will be required.

## 7.2 Effectiveness

The target groups for the project can be divided broadly under two headings, namely the direct beneficiaries and the indirect beneficiaries. The direct beneficiaries are described in the document 'Roots for Reconciliation – Program Proposal for Caucasus Region' as the communities where the YMCAs provide services. The indirect beneficiaries are the YMCA movements in Armenia, Georgia and Nagorno Karabagh, comprising 12 local YMCAs with more than 1200 individual members.

In the original proposal, the project objective was defined as follows: "Through developing camping programme as a strong and tested leadership and cooperation building facility and measure, to further strengthen and extend the YMCA Movement in Caucasus, as a mass-membership, ecumenical network standing for integrity of creation, peace and justice."

Indicators for assessing progress towards this objective (based on the project logframe) were described in the project proposal under four main headings: quantity, quality, time and place.

**"Quantity:** that at least 4 YMCA Resource Centres (with residential facilities) are operational to offer day or camping services to youth from marginalized groups and communities; that in total 12 thematic Reunion camp shifts are held enrolling 600 participants and leaders from the targeted group; and that at the final phase of the Reunions (5 shifts planned with 250 participants) the groups are formed predominantly

bringing together the "sharp ends" of the conflicts in the region – i.e. Armenians and Azerbaijanis, Georgians and Abkhazians and / or Ossetians."

**"Quality:** that all the established YMCA Resource Centres provide facility for and are integrated into national, regional and international networks securing sustainable programme delivery supplementary to and beyond the implementation of this programme; that all the Reunion thematic camp shifts within this programme are held on the basis of initiatives from the grassroots level, with cross-border coverage and involvement of non-YMCA groups and other local partner organizations; and that the groups representing conflicting sides involved at the final phase of the Reunions are not limited to interaction only within this one-go events, but whereby reasonable are given opportunity and facility to continue networking within the YMCA Movement."

**"Time:** that the planned YMCA Resource Centres and the network facility between them is fully operational by 2009 generating and offering socially marketable services also producing revenue; that effective the first year of the implementation plan the Reunion thematic camp shifts and their Support Measures are in place as scheduled; and that by the final phase of the implementation period of this programme non-YMCA groups are identified both for partnership within Reunion thematic camp component of the plan, as well as for the extension of the Movement in the region."

**"Place:** that on the one hand the location of the YMCA Resource Centres is close to the targeted marginalized communities, on the other (considering the actual existence of the YMCA Movements) has fair regional coverage (i.e. Armenia, Georgia and Karabagh); that all the programme residential activities (both camps and support measures) are held based on the same principle; and that solid foundation is in place to extend this coverage to the other part of the region whereby culturally and socially relevant – i.e. Azerbaijan, Abkhazia, South Ossetia."

**7.2.1 What intended outcomes have been achieved, not achieved and why**

The intended outcomes for the project are not very clearly spelled out in either the logframe or the project proposal. The clearest definition of targets concerns the numbers of events and participants that the project expected to achieve. Table 7.2 compares the numbers intended against the actual numbers at July 2009. It shows that the project has fallen short of the number of thematic reunions, the number of intended participants, the number enrolled in the 'Training for Program Developers' component and the annual numbers attending the 'Programme Forum' component. Taking into account that at July 2009 there was a further six months to the end of 2009 the numbers will still be significantly below the intended figures.

| <b>Table 7.2: Comparison of intended against actual numbers participating in Roots for Reconciliation project elements</b> |                                     |   |
|--|-------------------------------------|---|
|  | Number intended in project proposal | Actual number to end July 2009 <sup>7</sup> |
| Thematic Reunions held   | 12                                  | 7   |
| Number of participants and leaders involved in Reunions  | 600                                 | 328   |
| Number enrolled in TPD component   | 90                                  | 62  |
| Number attending Programme Forum per year  | 30                                  | 17 <sup>8</sup>                             |

Whilst it is important to note that the project had, at July 2009, fallen short of its planned targets, it is also important to acknowledge that the circumstances in which the project

<sup>7</sup> Attendance at events in the final six months of 2009 are not included here.

<sup>8</sup> 16 attended in 2007, 13 in 2008 and the 2009 has not yet been held at the time of preparing this report.

was operating made the achievement of these targets difficult. Some of the circumstances were entirely outside the control of the project and others more open to the project's influence. The Georgia-Russia war in 2008 could have had a catastrophic effect on the project. In fact, those involved were not only able to organise events shortly after the war but were also successful at bringing together Georgians and Russians in the same events. More open to the project's control were the delays concerning the Community Resource Centres that also had a negative impact on the numbers attending project events and activities.

### **Resource mobilisation**

The RfR project has mobilised funding from four main sources: EED, ICCO, EPER/HEKS and the YMCA itself. The project budget for the three year initial funding period is a total of €570,000 comprising €210,000 from EED, €210,000 from ICCO, €75,000 from EPER/HEKS and €75,000 from the YMCA. In addition to funding, the YMCA provides a number of 'in kind' resources to the project. Recently, a further extension of funding for 2010 of €186,000 has been agreed.

The project's resource mobilisation needs to be seen against a wider, historical backdrop of support to YMCAs in the region. The funding relationships for YMCAs in Southern Caucasus include partner relationships at both local and national levels with YMCAs in other parts of the world. Some of these partner relationships date back to the 1990s. So the resource mobilisation work of the RfR project has taken place in the context of a number of strong existing funding relationships.

Undoubtedly, the Roots for Reconciliation project has provided an added focus for external interest in the YMCAs in the region which has helped partners to create fundraising opportunities that may not otherwise have occurred. This has encouraged the continued significant investment of resources into the Region.

The success of the RfR project's resource mobilisation has had the unintended consequence of placing pressure on the national YMCA organisations to make the best use of the opportunities provided. In some cases the limitations in management capacity and organisational capacity in the three YMCA national movements has been highlighted by the requirement to use resources effectively and efficiently.

One example of this 'capacity bottleneck' is the limited progress made regarding the Community Resource Centres (see Boxes 7.1, 7.2 and 7.3). To date the four CRCs are at different stages of development and none is fully operational. The Pambak CRC in Armenia is under refurbishment, the Daranak CRC in Armenia is constructed but not yet fully equipped and furnished; the land for the third CRC at Ureki in Georgia has been purchased and construction is soon to begin and plans for the fourth in Nagorno Karabagh were changed to develop a non-residential office base and resource centre which is now fully operational.

### **Cross-border co-operation**

The project has organised 14 successful cross-border events in the period from January 2007 to July 2009 involving 175 participants from twelve countries. During this period, Reunions and other project events were held in Armenia (4), Georgia (5) and Nagorno Karabagh (3). Participants also attended one event in the Czech Republic and one in Italy.

The project has laid some very important foundations for extending its cross-border reach. Strong links have developed with YMCA Russia and also with the young people of Beslan School Number 1 in North Ossetia. There are plans to develop these relationships further in the future. Likewise, the project has the potential to develop relationships in Turkey and perhaps even Azerbaijan using its relationship with the International Awards Association as a 'neutral', non-faith based focus for collaborative activities.

One of the most significant achievements in terms of cross-border co-operation is the project's success in creating a 'cross-border culture' in the YMCA movements in the region. This 'cross-border culture' is a frame of mind that influences all of the work of the YMCAs in the region extends beyond the reunions and other events that physically bring people together. The cross-border culture is easy to identify at an individual level between participants (where participants from different countries are in constant contact with one another through the internet and SMS) and at local YMCA level (for example, through camps arranged between local YMCAs in different countries) and a general interest in finding ways of working together that extends beyond the 'boundaries' of the project. At



national level the cross-border culture is less well developed but is also visible through shared training and meetings. At a national level, the cross-border culture is greatly strengthened by the good relationships that have developed between the National Coordinators and with the Regional Coordinator of the project.

### **Peace and reconciliation work**

Because of the project's title and purpose, working for peace and reconciliation are central to the identity of the Roots for Reconciliation project. Working on these sensitive issues, particularly with young people, in an environment where conflicts are still erupting, is a major challenge. The RfR project has chosen to work on these issues by building trusting relationships between young people – not focusing on what divides them but helping them to see what connects them. This has been a slow process but it has led to the creation of strong cross border relationships at a grassroots level based on mutual understanding, tolerance and respect. As one YMCA International staff member put it "Anything that creates positive understanding between young people is exciting. RfR has achieved that".

The plans established in the project proposal visualised an ambitious situation in which the Reunions in the later stages of the project would be "formed predominantly bringing together the "sharp ends" of the conflicts in the region – i.e. Armenians and Azerbaijanis, Georgians and Abkhazians and / or Ossetians". Whilst some aspects of this goal have proved to be overly ambitious partly because of unfolding events in the region, the project has had some remarkable successes in its ability to foster positive cross-border relationships. For example, the project encouraged Georgian participation in the three reunions in Nagorno Karabagh and brought together Georgian and Armenian participants together with a small group of young people from Beslan School Number 1 (the tragic scene of the hostage-taking and subsequent siege in North Ossetia in September 2004) at the Prague YMCA Programme Festival in 2008. The Programme Festival held in Armenia in August 2009, although not included in the statistical analyses of this evaluation, is notable in bringing together YMCA Russia and YMCA of the US members with regional participants from Georgia, Armenia and Nagorno Karabagh.

At present, the project's peace and reconciliation work is carried out mainly through the Reunions. The Reunions are extremely important but raise the question of what happens between these events and how can those who are unable to attend the Reunions participate in the work of the project? The main way in which the project could strengthen its peace and reconciliation work would be by moving away from an events-based approach and encouraging and supporting the local and national YMCAs to integrate a peace and reconciliation approach into all aspects of their YMCA programmes. In this way the project could leave a more lasting legacy of a 'culture of peace and reconciliation'.

#### **7.2.2 What unintended outcomes have been achieved? How?**

A significant unintended outcome of the project is that there is now a higher level of organisational maturity in the national YMCA movements. This maturity has led to improved decision-making about the use of resources based on a deeper understanding of the national YMCAs' organisational strengths. An important example of this is the Georgia YMCA's decision not to become involved in relief activities during and after the Russia-Georgia war of 2008 but to concentrate on using its institutional strengths of youth service and youth development on behalf of the young Internally Displaced People.

In the words of the RfR National Coordinator for Georgia:

*"The Russian-Georgian war in August left tens of thousand people homeless and majority found shelter in Tbilisi. Our project had a rapid response to the crisis and there was a specific Reunion dedicated to the issue of providing help to IDP children and youth.*

*[A] total of 27 young people from local YMCA organizations of Georgia and Armenia participated in the Reunion. Latvian and German volunteers working in YMCAs in Georgia were also involved.*

*The main focus of the activities within the reunion was on IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons) from Tskhinvali and Gori regions, with a particular aim to provide service to children and youth affected by the military conflict.*

*During the entire week, reunion participants were working with approximately 90 IDP children and had the opportunity to go on excursions with them, visit numerous cultural*

*and religious sites and monuments; play various fun games; attend football game between Georgian and Cyprus National teams; have a joint dinner at McDonalds, etc."*

### 7.2.3 Does the project reach the intended beneficiaries?

When the project was designed, the project logframe and proposal placed a strong emphasis on opening up "YMCA services to youth in marginalized groups and communities in various parts of the region". Local YMCAs across the region reach out in their own ways to their communities – including (to varying degrees) marginalized communities. However, whilst most of the young people attending the RfR events were already involved in the YMCAs many of the project participants come from the marginalized groups and communities that the project intended to reach. For example, according to the RfR National Coordinator for Georgia *"the absolute majority of young people representing the YMCAs of Telavi and Batumi in RfR activities were of IDP background. Considerable number of Tbilisi YMCA leaders and volunteers that were part of RfR are also from IDP families."*

Despite these examples, it is reasonable to say that the project has not yet achieved the degree of reach into marginalized communities that it is capable of achieving. The HEKS/EPER funded work with the five neighbouring villages of refugee communities near the Daranak Community Resource Centre in Armenia provides a taste of what could be achieved with marginalised, local communities when the Community Resource Centre is fully operational. The extension funding agreed for 2010 offers an important opportunity to develop the work with marginalized groups and communities.

### 7.2.4 Is the project consistent with YMCA's values and principles?

The YMCA as an international movement has adopted four core values: Caring, Respect, Honesty and Responsibility. The project demonstrates a high level of consistency with all four principles. Participants have commented in very positive terms on their personal experience of how these principles are put into practice during RfR events. As mentioned earlier, out of a maximum score of five, the 77 questionnaire respondents scored responsibility at 4.7, honesty at 4.7, respect at 4.8 and care at 4.9. Personal experiences that support these high scores are too numerous to mention individually, but are constantly referred to in informal conversations and were also obvious in the consultant's observations of two of the RfR events.

YMCA International adopted five principles to guide its work. These are commonly referred to as the 'Kampala Principles'<sup>9</sup>. They are:

1. To work for equal opportunity and justice for all.
2. To work for and maintain an environment in which relationships among people are characterised by love and understanding.
3. To work for and maintain conditions, within the YMCA and in society, its organisations and institutions, which allow for honesty, depth and creativity.
4. To develop and maintain leadership and programme patterns which exemplify the varieties and depth of Christian experience.
5. To work for the development of the whole person.

Participants were not asked specifically about these principles during the evaluation but through observation of two reunions and through the project participants' interview responses, it is easy to find evidence that the project has demonstrated all of these principles in its work.

### 7.2.5 How have participants' lives been changed by the project?

It is clear that for many of the participants, their experience of the Roots for Reconciliation project has been genuinely life-changing. For almost all it has been life-enhancing.

The most significant source of data about the personal effect of participating in the project events comes from the participants themselves. Through their responses to the questionnaire survey, interviews and testimonies (see section 6.1) it is clear that many of the participants experienced life-enhancing changes. Most of the reported changes refer to

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<sup>9</sup> See <http://www.ymca.int/116.0.html> (referenced 10/2009)

increasing awareness and understanding, some to attitude change and increased tolerance and others explicitly to psychological changes (improved mood, optimism about life and getting rid of "complexes").

On a more practical level, participants have reported making new friends (many from other countries), having a better understanding of their country and the region, strengthened leadership skills, and feeling more a part of the international YMCA movement.

It is, of course, too early to say how long-lasting these effects will be and how participants will use their experiences to influence the choices and decisions they make in the future. However, many of those interviewed reported that they share stories of their experiences in the project with family and friends so it seems that already others' lives are being influenced by their experience of the Roots for Reconciliation project.

#### 7.2.6 How have the national YMCA organisations developed as a result of the project?

There are a number of ways in which the National YMCAs have developed as a result of the project:

Through the RfR project, the national YMCAs have gained access to resources to enable them to build and/or develop Community Resource Centres that are intended to provide them with a sustainable income stream in the future. These centres will also enable them to expand the range of activities they offer and to host national, regional and international events.

Through the project, the national YMCA organisations have also been able to cover at least part of the costs of staff members who have taken on the role of National Coordinators for the project. These staff members have had exposure to experiences and training which has built their capacity significantly to better serve their national YMCA as office bearers. In the words of one of the RfR National Coordinators, *"the RfR project has opened my mind and developed my professional skills."*

It is in the long-term interest of the national YMCAs that the local YMCAs are strong and vibrant organisations in their own right. The RfR project, with its emphasis on training young leaders and building capacity has contributed to the development of local YMCAs. Through the RfR project, local YMCA leaders have built relationships that have influenced the development of more bilateral relationships between local YMCAs both within countries and across borders.

At the same time, by facilitating regular meetings between the leaders of local and national YMCAs, the RfR project has, in the words of one National Coordinator, *"had a big effect by helping our national YMCA movement develop as a movement and not [a collection of] local organisations"*.

Although it is not a *national* YMCA, it is fair to say that the 'YMCA in Nagorno Karabagh' would not have come into existence without the Roots for Reconciliation project. The RfR project funding provides 100% of the funding for YMCA's work in Nagorno Karabagh and the RfR National Coordinator is the YMCA's only paid staff member there.

Overall, the project has undoubtedly raised the profile of the YMCA as an organisation that operates with a regional focus. This is having a positive effect on the national YMCAs: attracting new members, drawing in more resources and also potentially increasing their leverage in negotiations with municipal and national level government.

#### 7.2.7 Overall, what lessons can be learned concerning project effectiveness?

The project has been very effective at mobilising resources by building on existing relationships and YMCA's organisational strengths. The design of the project, combining peace and reconciliation with movement strengthening has also enabled the leveraging of resources that may not otherwise have been possible.

Cross-border co-operation has been built very effectively through the careful use of events such as Reunions, trainings and meetings. By building interpersonal relationships, the project has undoubtedly been instrumental in strengthening the bonds at both local and national YMCA levels.

The peace and reconciliation focus of the project has been important in helping to shape its identity among the YMCA leaders. The project is now ready to move beyond 'events' and 'mainstream' its approach to reconciliation in the programmatic work of the local and

national YMCAs and thereby achieve its goals of influencing the lives of marginalised young people in their communities.

### 7.3 Efficiency

The Roots for Reconciliation project budget for the three year initial funding period is a total of €570,000 comprising €210,000 from EED, €210,000 from ICCO, €75,000 from EPER/HEKS and €75,000 from the YMCA. The budget is divided under seven main headings (see Table 7.3).

| <b>Table 7.3.: Total RfR project budget and Expenditure for years 2007 + 2008</b> |                                 |   |                                      |  |
|---|---------------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|--|
|   | <b>Budget<br/>01.07 – 12.09</b> | <b>Percentage of budget<br/>01.07 – 12.09</b> | <b>Expenditure<br/>(2007 + 2008)</b> | <b>Percentage of<br/>total expenditure<br/>(2007 + 2008)</b> |
| Training and Support Measures   | 46,080                          | 8.1   | 27,001                               | 7.5  |
| Youth camps and reunions  | 131,400                         | 23.0  | 63,211                               | 17.6   |
| Community Resource Centres  | 180,000                         | 31.6  | 154,094                              | 42.9   |
| Equipment and admin   | 94,000                          | 16.5  | 56,172                               | 15.7   |
| Personnel   | 77,400                          | 13.6  | 51,600                               | 14.4   |
| Auditor   | 13,500                          | 2.4   | 6,750                                | 1.9  |
| Reserve   | 27,620                          | 4.8   | 0                                    | 0  |
| <b>TOTAL</b>  | <b>570,000</b>                  | <b>100</b>                                    | <b>358,828</b>                       | <b>100</b>   |

Table 7.3 shows that the total expenditure for the years 2007 and 2008 was €358,830 (63% of the project's three-year budget). Over these two years, the proportion of project expenditure spent on the Community Resource Centres was 42.9% and on other non-CRC budget headings, 57.1%. Of the 57.1%, training and support measures accounted for 7.5% and youth camps and reunions accounted for 17.6% (a total of 25.1% of the project's expenditure in 2007 and 2008). It is the activities that involve the participants that are the main way in which the project is making progress towards its goals (the CRCs are making only a limited contribution at present as only one of the four is fully operational). So the project expenditure that is really making a difference to young people's lives at present represents 25% of the total project expenditure.

#### 7.3.1 How many people have benefited directly, indirectly?

The individuals who have benefited directly have been those who attended events organised by the RfR. A total of 175 participants attended the events organised through the Roots for Reconciliation project from January 2007 to July 2009. In all 425 attendances have been recorded over this period. This means that a number of participants have attended more than one event.

Obviously, it is difficult to strike a balance between, on the one hand, maximising the number of participants who have been given the opportunity to participate in the project events and, on the other hand, ensuring the development of a cohort of young leaders by providing them with exposure to a range of opportunities for training and cross-border relationships with the young people from other national YMCA movements.

Table 6.1 shows that 45.7% of participants attended only one event and a further 29% attended two events. Fewer than 10% of the participants attended six or more events and only one person attended all fourteen events held during that period.

A second category of young people has also benefited by being involved in Reunions, not as full participants but as beneficiaries. A good example of this relates to the Regional Reunion held in Tbilisi, Georgia in October 2008. The 27 young participants at the Reunion (including YMCA volunteers from Germany and Latvia) worked with around 90 young IDPs

from Tskhinvali and Gori regions. These young people benefited directly from the RfR project event. Those who have benefited indirectly for the project are the children and young people at the local YMCAs who have been involved in camps and other events organised locally and led by the young YMCA leaders who themselves have grown and developed as a result of their exposure to RfR project activities. Anecdotal evidence from RfR participants suggests that the activities that they, in turn, organise have been enriched by the RfR experience.

### 7.3.2 Could the same results have been achieved at lower costs?

Figures for the years 2007 and 2008 show a total of 275 attendances at Reunions and camp leader training events. According to the project's figures, the total cost of these events was €63,211 making an average cost per attendance of €230. A cost analysis of all the events shows that the most costly events per capita were, as one might expect, those that were held outside the Region in the Czech Republic, Germany and Italy. The per-capita cost of the residential Reunions varies from €213 (in Nagorno Karabagh) to €125 (at the YMCA centre at Pambak, in Armenia). The costs for Reunions and TPD events have been kept as low as possible by using overland travel rather than air travel within the Region and negotiating significant discounts at venues.

Undoubtedly, the difficulties experienced in getting the Community Resource Centres operational has meant that the project has had to pay significantly more for its residential events than would have been the case if all had been held in YMCA venues. It is noteworthy that the cheapest per capita cost for a Reunion was the event held at the YMCA's own premises at Pambak in Armenia. In this respect, it can be argued that similar results could have been achieved at lower costs if more events would have been organised in YMCA's own premises. Or, alternatively, for the same costs more young people could have been involved in the project, perhaps enabling it to achieve its intended attendance levels of 600 for the three years. However, the per-head costs of the Reunions and TPD events averages at around €40-50 per day including travel and accommodation. This reasoning supports the idea of getting the CRCs fully operational as soon as possible, as this will bring about significant cost savings.

Regarding the administrative costs of the project, it is difficult to see how these could have been lower. The project is Coordinated at a Regional level using one half of the time of one individual who has his office in his own home. At a national level, the project has three National Coordinators, one of whom is half time and the other two full-time. YMCA Europe provides in-house financial administration and arranges external auditing.

### 7.3.3 How well have the resources been used?

This is a complex question to answer. As mentioned earlier, the project has been constrained by the slow progress in developing the Community Resource Centres. Indeed, it can be argued that the CRCs have been a distraction from the main purpose of the project during the three-year initial funding period. However, taking a longer term view, when the CRCs are fully operational they will provide a number of valuable capital assets in the form of venues for hosting local, national and cross-border events with a focus on peace and reconciliation. They will also help to provide a financially secure base for YMCA movement-building in the region. In this sense, whilst the CRCs have been a short-term distraction, in the longer term they represent an essential means of securing sustainable impact.

The evidence from the questionnaires and interviews suggests that the participants have been underestimated as project resources. Also, the ability and motivation of the young leaders in the Assessment Team demonstrates their potential value to the RfR project and their local YMCAs. The potential of the young leaders to work on project issues between formal events and to influence the attitudes of others is currently an underused resource.

### 7.3.4 Could better results have been achieved by using the resources in different ways?

The decision to organise residential reunions has been an effective way of bringing together young people from across the region. Cross-border events are, by their very nature, more expensive because they involve travel costs as well as residential costs. In the early days of the project when the participants were only beginning to make relationships the concept of a residential reunion held at a venue not only makes sense but was an essential way of providing a neutral and safe space.

One important factor affecting project efficiency has been the cost involved in organising the Reunions and camp leader training sessions. Economies have been made wherever possible in terms of both travel costs and the cost of venues. Whilst one way of addressing this problem has been to use low-cost or YMCA-owned venues wherever possible (which will be more possible when the CRCs are fully operational), another strategy could now be to consider asking the families of the YMCA members in one country to 'host' participants from other countries. This would, of course, be both sensitive and logistically complicated but would take the cultural exposure of those involved to a deeper level.

#### 7.3.5 Overall, what lessons can be learned concerning project efficiency?

Organising residential cross-border events can be done economically especially by using the YMCA's own venues.

Keeping administration costs for the project low comes at a cost in terms of the high workload of the project coordinator.

## 7.4 Flexibility

### 7.4.1 In what ways has the context changed during the project's lifetime?

The South Caucasus provides an unpredictable and sometimes politically charged environment for civil society organisations such as the YMCA. This is particularly challenging for projects such as Roots for Reconciliation which focus on peace and reconciliation.

Two particularly significant major events have occurred during the life of the project to date. The first was the outbreak of war between Russia and Georgia on 7 August 2008. The second is the global financial crisis which came to the forefront of public attention in September 2008 and which has had major effects on the economies of countries in the Region. In addition, political commentators have noted an increasingly authoritarian approach by governments towards the expression of opposition views. All of these factors have led to a generally less optimistic atmosphere among the general public in the countries of the South Caucasus.

Fortunately, not all changes in the geo-political context create threats. Indeed, some provide opportunities, albeit ones that must be considered very cautiously. At the time of writing, diplomatic and economic initiatives have been taken to improve the relationship between Armenia and Turkey. This creates a potential opportunity for deepening the reconciliation processes between the two countries that are of concern to the project.

Also, not all changes in the context of the RfR project are external to the YMCA. For example, internal tensions in the YMCA Armenia movement created difficulties which put at risk both in-country and cross-border work and affected the Roots for Reconciliation project.

### 7.4.2 How has the project responded to the changing context?

Overall, the project has dealt well with the changing context, even managing to create positive situations out of what could easily have been seen as potential disasters for the project. The Russia-Georgia war of 2008 could easily have led to a cessation of relationships between the respective YMCAs. What has actually happened is the opposite as can be seen in the following section.

Political changes in Georgia and Nagorno Karabagh led to problems in purchasing land for the planned Community Resource Centres there. As a result, the project could not use its own camp sites for all the planned events. This increased the costs of the events and reduced the income generation possibilities for the national and local YMCAs.

### 7.4.3 Has the project been proactive enough to respond to the changing context?

The war between Russia and Georgia placed the project under considerable pressure but it has demonstrated great resilience in being able not only to cope with the challenge but rise above the difficulties and demonstrate considerable maturity of cross-border relationship-building. Despite some tensions within the YMCA itself, the RfR project provided a mature platform for repairing strained relationships. What has emerged since the war are stronger institutional relations between the national YMCA movements of Georgia and Russia and between the individual young people involved. This was clearly demonstrated during the ProFest held in Yerevan in August 2009 (only one year after the

war) which brought together participants from twelve countries including Russia and Georgia in an amicable, mutually supportive and productive way.

**7.4.4 What has been the effect of external influences on the achievement of intended outcomes?**

Besides the Russia-Georgia war of 2008 referred to above, one of the most significant external obstacles to the achievement of the project's goals has been the difficulties faced in purchasing land or buildings and beginning the construction of three of the four Community Resource Centres in Georgia, Nagorno Karabagh and Armenia. The progress of each of the four Community Resource Centres has been influenced in different ways by external and, to some extent, internal difficulties. The history of the CRCs is explained by representatives of the national YMCA movements in Boxes 7.1, 7.2, and 7.3 below.

**Box 7.1: The Georgia Community Resource Centre**

***A brief summary of the initial plans for developing CRC; why is the CRC important? What it will be used for?***

The creation and development of camping infrastructure is one of the key priorities that the National Board of the YMCA of Georgia has set forth for the future work in 2006. This field of intervention is still under-developed in Georgia - at present there is no organization that provides camping services to young people on a regular basis. The demand for this particular service, however, is quite high from the society. The YMCA of Georgia has the capacity to assume this responsibility, especially taking into consideration the big experience that our international movement and local organizations of YMCAs have in this particular field. Taking the leadership role in providing camping services in the country is a very good foundation:

- To strengthen the entire YMCA movement in Georgia;
- To raise the profile of the organization;
- To eventually acquire self-sustainability.

In March 2009, YMCA of Georgia managed to obtain the land where it is planned to develop the Community Resource Center. The site is located in the West Georgia, on the Black Sea coast, in the vicinity of resort Ureki. It is situated approximately 1, 5-2, 0 kilometres away from the Black Sea and is located on the elevated plateau 50 meters above sea level. The Region is subtropical climate zone, the average temperature is + 6 Celsius in winter and + 26 Celsius in summer.

***Who has provided resources and support for the CRC?***

YMCA Europe  
 YMCA of the USA  
 YMCA Germany

***What have been the challenges involved? What effect did they have on our original plans? What changes, if any, were necessary to make to the plans?***

YMCA of Georgia has been searching for suitable place and building to develop it into CRC for a long time. Initially, the organization intended to buy a former Kindergarten facility in Tsikhisdziri, West Georgia. The facility was in the ownership of the government and the purchasing process was protracted for about 2 years and without success. This significantly delayed the plans of YMCA of Georgia regarding developing CRC in scheduled time. Eventually, it was decided to buy the land elsewhere and construct a CRC according to the design elaborated by YMCA of Georgia. It took much less time, as the land was obtained from individual and the process did not involve any bureaucratic obstacles.

***What has been achieved by now?***

The work is already under way at the campsite: Fencing of the area is completed; Water supply is installed; Electricity posts leading to the site have been set; the road to the campsite has been repaired; the laying of the foundation will commence soon.

***What are the plans for completing and using CRC?***

We plan to construct multi-functional facility that will accommodate approximately 50 people and will be equipped with conference and dining halls, Sports and recreational facilities, office space and etc...

In case of sufficient funding, that will avoid any delays in working process, CRC will be completed and ready for use by the beginning of 2011.

The CRC will be utilized for conducting camps, reunions, trainings and seminars. Not only for the use

of YMCA, but we plan to offer the service of CRC to other organizations as well. It will contribute to the self-sustainability of the Centre, as well as YMCA of Georgia.

As there are CRC facilities in Armenia as well, it offers a great opportunity to develop network and provide joint activities that will further strengthen partnership ties of YMCA movements in the region.

#### **Box 7.2: The Armenia Community Resource Centres**

There are two YMCA CRCs in Armenia. One is Camp Aramian, a property of YMCA Vanadzor, and the other one is Daranak CRC, a joint property of YMCA Vardenis and YMCA Armenia. Both CRCs have initially been developed and are considered as important assets to support YMCA activities both locally and nationally. Currently, they both have issues with completion: Camp Aramian – reconstruction and furnishing/equipping; Daranak CRC – furnishing/equipping. Another challenge both are facing is development of a sustainable marketing strategy for ensuring a minimum profitability over operational costs. With regards to the latter task, YMCA Armenia is seeking professional technical assistance and is currently negotiating with YMCA of the USA for support.

The principal financial support for Camp Aramian reconstruction came from the Aramian family in the USA, which was a key donor for YMCA Vanadzor since 1996. YMCA of the USA has provided significant technical assistance, as well as financial contribution in reconstructing the camp. Currently, there is an initial commitment from YMCA of the USA for providing financial support to complete the camp. It is anticipated that the camp will start operating in mid 2010.

Completion of Daranak CRC still remains pending, and there are no ready-to-go plans to solve this issue yet. However, YMCA Armenia anticipates completing the task within frameworks of future projects and programs. Another concern to be addressed soon is the final formalization and operation of the CRC as a joint property. Diverse options are being reviewed and communicated among the stakeholders. These options imply a principle of viewing the function of facility management apart from the function of facility ownership (possession). This means that the entity managing facility operations does not have to be necessarily one of the title-holders. Instead, the latter would delegate its management to the one that would provide a business plan demonstrating optimal profitability over operating costs, while ensuring an agreed upon operation of YMCA programs, which the CRC facility was initially designed for.

#### **Box 7.3: The Nagorno Karabagh Community Resource Centre**

Nagorno-Karabakh conflict settlement is one of the most complicated issues in the South Caucasus and it influences almost all the key spheres of life. YMCA Artsakh is the only youth international organization in the NKR which doesn't deal with politics and is the "bridge" of cooperation with the young people all over the world.

It is very difficult for the young people to develop because of the political situation in Nagorno Karabakh and it's not always so possible to find partners for the implementation of different projects. For four years we have been giving such opportunities as the cooperation with the youth of the various countries by means of cultural events, festivals, educational and intellectual programs where the young people participate from both the South Caucasus and Europe. Now, there is an increasing interest toward the organization. The number of the people who wish to cooperate and be the members of the organization grows.

From the very first days of the foundation of YMCA Artsakh there has been the problem of finding a suitable venue where the young people as well as the leaders of the organization could gather, have meetings, discuss the further projects, do something on their own.

Because of the lack of the resources and a meeting place a keen necessity arose to create a Resource Center in Stepanakert where the organization members as well as all the people to be interested in the organization's activities could come, create a technical base, have discussions and plan the future strategy of the organization. It is intended that all the resources of the center will be aimed at the development of the civil society.

In 2009 an opportunity appeared thanks to the project YMCA Europe Roots for Reconciliation. Soughi city in Nagorno Karabakh is one of the cultural centers in the Caucasus. As a result of the military actions the city was partially destroyed. Initially there was an idea to create the Resource Center in Shoushi. It was intended to reconstruct the building where the Resource Center could be located as well as to establish the local organization in Shoushi. There was an arrangement with the authorities concerning getting the free land or building in need of reconstruction with the idea of creating the



Resource Center there.

However, after the NKR government had approved the project on the whole restoration of the city and recreation of its former architectural heritage, all the process of the registration of documents was stopped as the city plan must be affirmed. According to the conditions of the project we couldn't wait for this length of time as the terms were established by YMCA Europe to prepare all the papers in time. This was a very difficult period for us. As a result, it was decided to remove the Resource Center to Stepanakert. In early April, 2009 we started all the preparations for the opening of YMCA Resource Center.

Today YMCA Artsakh has the Resource Center in Stepanakert and the property in land (4000 m<sup>2</sup>) which we could acquire thanks to the project. The Resource Center serves as the YMCA main office. Besides, there is a small studio where we can make video montages of our events. It is planned to build a camp on the land if there are opportunities.

At the **local level** we intend to use these resources to: (1) create new opportunities and conditions for the youth and YMCA members in Nagorno Karabakh; (2) set up a studio which will carry out different projects for the youth and make social clips; (3) increase the YMCA role in Nagorno Karabakh; (4) develop new leaders; (5) involve the volunteers in the new projects.

At the level **of the South Caucasus** we intend to use these resources to: (1) Work out of the general ideas and implementation of the joint projects; (2) expand the YMCA mission in the South Caucasus; (3) assist the development of peace and trust in the South Caucasus.

At the **International Level we intend to develop** new joint projects, new cooperation and experience exchange.

#### 7.4.5 How has the project evolved over time?

The Roots for Reconciliation project for a number of reasons got off to a relatively slow start but has now developed into a project with a strong identity and positive reputation within the YMCA internationally. Although the project has used events as its main delivery mechanism, the events have become more sophisticated in the most recent stages of the project's development. Also noteworthy has been the increasing sense of ownership of the project that has developed among the young people. This was particularly noticeable among those who became involved in the assessment process.

## 7.5 Gender

One of the five 'Kampala Principles' of the YMCA is 'to work for equal opportunity'. This section examines how the RfR project has addressed the gender dimension of equality of opportunity.

### 7.5.1 How were gender issues addressed in the project design and implementation?

Gender was recognised as an important issue in the project proposal document. The intention was to ensure that young women and young men were equally involved in the project, including the development of leadership skills. In terms of numbers, whilst the staffing of the project is entirely male, the participants comprised 56.3% females and 43.7% males.

Of course, gender issues amount to far more than simply equal numbers represented. Programming of appropriate activities and the challenging of conventional roles are both important demonstrations of gender awareness and sensitivity.

The programming issue has clearly been integral to the RfR project from the outset. Both young men and young women have taken leadership roles and have been equally actively involved in planning the events. Reunions have placed considerable emphasis on activities which involve both males and females on an equal basis such as dance, singing, music, drama and other cultural activities. Noteworthy is the limited emphasis on sporting activities in the Reunion programmes. Whether this has been done deliberately or not, it has meant that one area that conventionally divides the sexes has not occurred as much in the project as in some other YMCA programmes.

Also noteworthy is the relationship between gender and level of 'activism' among participants. One small but significant indication of this was in the selection of participants

to attend the Framework Reunion in Ureki. At this reunion the assessment team for this evaluation was formed. The team comprises twelve female and two male participants!

As to the challenging of gender roles where these constrain equality, there is very little evidence that this has happened in the project events. However, the levels of mutual respect shown between gender groups is noteworthy given the age of many of the participants (though this is perhaps not so remarkable in the Caucasus given the cultural norms that prevail, as it would be in a similar aged group in Western Europe).

#### 7.5.2 How effectively does the project meet the needs of young women as well as young men?

The questionnaire and interview surveys of participants demonstrates that all participants, irrespective of gender, believe that their needs were both taken into consideration and met during the project events. This suggests that the programming of activities was very sensitive to the needs of both sexes.

Observation of the Programme Festival held in Yerevan in August 2009 and informal discussions held with participants during that event confirms that the programming has been very gender-sensitive because it focuses on what connects the participants, irrespective of gender.

## 7.6 Impact

### 7.6.1 What has been the impact of the project on individuals, their communities and other stakeholders?

The impact of a project that is still underway is difficult, if not impossible, to assess. This is particularly true of projects that have ambitious aims of bringing about peace and reconciliation in a region immersed in historical and current conflicts. At this stage in the life of the RfR project it is more appropriate to consider outcomes than impact. But what does 'outcome' mean when applied to individuals, their communities and other stakeholders?

For **individuals**, we could reasonably expect to see the following outcomes of their involvement in the project: growth in confidence and leadership skills; meaningful and sustained relationships with young people from other cultures based on tolerance and understanding; active engagement with their local YMCA using their new skills and knowledge.

There is a great deal of evidence to demonstrate that such changes have been brought about by the project (see Section 6.1 of this report). Box 1 includes extracts from the testimonies of the young participants in the Roots for Reconciliation project. Their words speak eloquently of the impact that the project has had on their lives. The responses to the questionnaire survey and interviews show that the testimonies are representative of almost every participant's experience of the project.

An indication of the sense of pride and ownership felt by participants towards the work of the project was demonstrated at the RfR 'Framework Reunion' held in Ureki in July 2009. As previously described, this Reunion was organised to create and train an Assessment Team for this evaluation. The young people involved embraced the task enthusiastically and, despite the time commitment that was demanded of them, planned an ambitious schedule of interviews, questionnaires and testimonies for the collection of data that they subsequently delivered.

For **communities** the outcomes one might expect to see include: awareness of the work of the local YMCA; having had an opportunity to express the needs of the community through surveys or discussion with local YMCA leaders; and the active involvement of young people living near the Community Resource Centres and YMCA centres.

An example of the potential that the Roots for Reconciliation project can have through the CRCs can be seen at Daranak in Armenia. The recently constructed Daranak CRC is on the shores of Lake Sevan near Vardenis YMCA. The site of the CRC is very close to five villages providing homes to refugees and a refugee camp. Although the centre is not yet fully furnished or equipped it has started to be used to provide day classes on two days a week for the refugee children living nearby. Classes in computer literacy, English, sports & games and a scouting programme are run by volunteers and staff from Vardenis YMCA. When the centre is fully equipped, many more activities are planned for local people.

**Other stakeholders** might be expected to know that the YMCA in the region is working with young people on peace and reconciliation issues; that some regular contact with local or national YMCA organisations was happening; that some partnerships and collaborative ventures involving the YMCA and other stakeholders was under discussion or had started.

As one senior YMCA US staff member put it "In my thirteen year career in the YMCA I would rate the Roots for Reconciliation project in the top two or three YMCA initiatives worldwide".

**7.6.2 In what ways has the project influenced services and collaborations within the targeted communities? In what ways has the project created social and economic opportunities for the targeted communities?**

At present, there is very little evidence that the project has influenced services and collaborations within the targeted communities or created social and economic opportunities for the targeted communities. As previously mentioned the CRC at Daranak is situated in a remote location but close to five refugee villages. Children from the villages make use of the English and computing classes run at the centre though the range of opportunities is likely to remain limited until the centre is fully equipped. It is possible that the centre could then be made available as a venue to adult groups outside of the camping season for classes and other social and educational opportunities organised by other organisations.

Creating more social and economic opportunities for local communities could be done in two ways. Firstly, opportunities for local communities are more likely to occur when the CRCs are fully operational though, at present, it is difficult to see how this will happen in practice. In the case of the Georgia CRC (Camp Orange) near Ureki, because it is in a fairly remote rural location, it does not have a large local community to target and it is unlikely to create economic opportunities for the nearby community except perhaps during construction and, perhaps, providing local supplies for camps.

Secondly, using RfR project resources, the local YMCAs could do outreach work in the communities themselves. The project could support vocational education classes and other activities for young people with an inbuilt peace and reconciliation message.

**7.6.3 In what ways has the project influenced the YMCA 'Movement Strengthening' process in the Region?**

*"The movement strengthening initiative aims to strengthen cooperation throughout the world YMCA Movement. It also aims to mobilise all the Movement's resources - both human and financial - to build the capacities of YMCAs to meet the needs of communities. The GOP for movement strengthening is a tool to develop each YMCA so that it can function more effectively, and remain socially relevant with a clearly defined mission. The GOP for movement strengthening is built on the three pillars of: 1. Mission clarity, 2. Institutional viability and 3. Social relevance"<sup>10</sup>*

The project has embraced the issue of YMCA 'movement strengthening' in a number of ways:

- The design of the project is itself a demonstration of a commitment to social relevance. All events, and particularly the reunions, organised under the RfR project have aimed to be socially relevant in a region where conflict is a constant backdrop.
- In the shorter term, the 'Training Programme Developers' part of the project has placed a major emphasis on the development of young leaders and their understanding of the YMCA mission and values.
- The planning and organisation of Reunions and related 'spin-off' activities including camps has provided a platform for the young leaders to learn from the experience of applying their skills, thereby contributing to institutional viability.
- The recruitment of YMCA national staff members as National Coordinators for the project has both required and built the capacity of the national YMCAs, contributing further to institutional viability.

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<sup>10</sup> YMCA International Global Operating Plan for Movement Strengthening

- By embracing a 'Do No Harm' approach, the project has strengthened the awareness and skills of YMCA leaders in the region to manage the delicate nature of peace and reconciliation programming.
- In the short to medium term, the project has successfully mobilised resources from a range of sources within the region, the YMCA movement internationally and other international partners. The resources include finance, expertise and human resources. A significant proportion of these financial resources have been invested into the construction of Community Resource Centres.
- In the longer term, the emphasis on developing camping as a potential means of income generation has required the YMCA movements to take a more 'business-like' approach to managing their activities and building their organisational capacity and institutional viability.
- The Community Resource Centre element of the project is designed to create a sustainable income stream for each of the three national movements thereby also making a crucial contribution to institutional viability.

All of these have contributed to greater levels of confidence, leadership expertise and a vision of financially self sustaining national movements working in close co-operation with each other and as less dependent members of the YMCA family.

In addition, there are an increasing number of examples of local-to-local collaboration (particularly camps) that have been inspired by the Roots for Reconciliation project.

#### 7.6.4 Overall, what lessons can be learned concerning project impact?

The fact that Roots for Reconciliation was designed as a three-year project (and not simply as a series of disconnected one-off events) has made the project a genuinely developmental process for the YMCAs in the region. Nevertheless, more could be done to shift the emphasis away from events and towards a mainstream approach to peace and reconciliation work with young people.

Linking peace and reconciliation with programme development and institutional strengthening has created a very strong framework with greater possibilities for sustainable benefits.

Strong project coordination and leadership at the Regional level have been essential to achieving the project's impact.

From an international YMCA perspective the Roots for Reconciliation approach is closely aligned with a commitment to 'global youth volunteering' that brings young people together across borders to work together with communities. This has made it easier for other YMCAs to understand, support and provide resources to the project.

## 7.7 Sustainability

### 7.7.1 How long-lasting is the flow of benefits to the beneficiaries and to society in general likely to be? Why?

In terms of the movement strengthening of the national YMCA movements, one of the main legacies of the project will be the Community Resource Centres. Indeed, the key to the sustainability of the national movements involved in the project depends on the completion, marketing and maximum use of the Community Resource Centres for the purposes of income generation.

The CRCs, when they are fully operational will provide camping opportunities to many young people who would otherwise not have access to such resources. The CRC in Daranak also holds a key to reaching out further to children and youth from marginalised refugee communities.

In terms of relationship-building and attitude change, some of the participants have already reported new cross-border friendships and changes of attitude that are likely to be life-changing at least for some. This has already had a modest but significant influence on their relationships with friends and family members.

### 7.7.2 What plans are there to enable systems, structures, processes and relationships to endure?

There are already positive signs that inter-personal relationships have developed to the point that they are enduring through normal social interaction. For example, the young leaders involved in the project use SMS and a wide range of social networking tools to keep in regular touch with each other across and within national borders. Lifelong friendships have been created.

Relationships between local YMCAs are undoubtedly stronger now than when the project first started. This is true for both cross-border relationships and in-country relationships between local YMCAs. These relationships are likely to endure because of the genuine regard that people have for one another.

### 7.7.3 What has been learned from the project experience?

It is important to address sustainability from the earliest stage of project design but even this is no guarantee of achieving sustainability.

## 7.8 Transparency and accountability

The Terms of Reference for this external assessment excluded the technicalities regarding the project's construction of the Community Resource Centres so this section focuses on the other elements of the project, namely the sub-projects for the Reunions and TPDs.

### 7.8.1 How transparent has been the use of project funds?

The accounting, reporting and auditing systems used by YMCA Europe and required by the funding partners are rigorous. No concerns have been raised about a lack of transparency concerning the project's use of funds during this assessment.

### 7.8.2 How transparent has been the governance and management of the project at both Regional and national levels?

The Roots for Reconciliation project is implemented by the national YMCAs of Armenia, Georgia and the YMCA in Nagorno Karabagh. The project is managed by the Regional Coordinator and National Coordinators on behalf of YMCA Europe. Strategic and annual planning is carried out at the Programme Forum meetings. Monitoring of progress and day-to-day decision making is done through meetings of the project coordinators on an 'as needed' basis. Regular meetings are held with the office bearers of the national YMCAs. Bi-annual reports on the project are prepared by the Project Coordinator with the close involvement of the National Coordinators.

The governance and management of the project is closely related to the governance systems of the national YMCA movements and with YMCA Europe's accountability systems.

In addition to their internal governance and management structures, two of the three participating YMCA movements have supportive structures that reflect their levels of organisational development. YMCA Armenia has a Partnership Group with an elected chair comprising representatives from a range of supporting partner organisations and YMCAs. YMCA Georgia has a Field Group organised through YMCA Europe comprising representatives from a range of supporting partner organisations and YMCAs. YMCA in Nagorno Karabagh, because of its fledgling status, does not have a Partnership Group or Support Group.

Projects of this scale and complexity usually have a multi-organisation Steering Group. In the case of the Roots for Reconciliation project one would expect to see in place a steering group involving project participants, representatives from the YMCA movements, YMCA Europe, the main international and YMCA partners and other key stakeholders. This was proposed at the early stages of the project but was not put into place. The absence of a steering group has had important consequences:

The formal voice for the young people who are actively involved in the project is mainly provided by attendance at the annual programme Forum meeting but this is attended by only a small number of project participants. Whilst few of the young people have commented on their limited voice, there is currently a missed opportunity for actively involving and developing more of the young leaders in decisions concerning the RfR project about which they care passionately.

Finally, as there is no formal body of stakeholders for overseeing the implementation of project annual plans and ensuring the sub-projects are kept on track, this has placed undue responsibility on the shoulders of the Regional Coordinator. The project has been fortunate that the Project Coordinator has been extremely capable of taking on this responsibility but the pressure of work that this has created needs to be recognised by YMCA Europe when planning future regional projects.

#### 7.8.3 How has accountability been organised?

The project should be able to demonstrate accountability to its various stakeholders: to participants and their communities who are target groups for the project; the YMCA movements in the region; international partners who provide funds and other resources and support; YMCA partners who also provide funds and other resources and support; and YMCA Europe which has overall responsibility for the project.

Accountability **to participants** is organised through the organisation of events in which the participants can contribute to the programming; by providing clear selection criteria for attendance; by creating a safe environment; by involving the participants in evaluations of the events; by providing training and through the Programme Forum meetings that reflect on the year's activities and plan the forthcoming year. As mentioned earlier, these mechanisms do not provide the participants with adequate opportunities to influence decision-making.

Accountability **to communities** is organised by conducting needs assessments and providing activities that relate to identified needs.

The project is accountable **to the YMCA movements** at national level primarily by appointing office-bearers as National Coordinators who are then in a position to be fully aware of and involved in all project activities and decision-making. Members of national YMCAs are also actively involved in planning and organising events and in the support measures such as Programme Forums where monitoring and planning occurs. Informal communication between the Project Coordinator and the national YMCAs also provides an important channel for accountability.

YMCA movements are accountable to the YMCA Europe Roots for Reconciliation project through implementation contracts.

Accountability to **international donors** is managed in three main ways. The financial accountability is organised through scrupulously maintained accounts that are independently audited on behalf of EED. The accountability for progress in implementing plans is primarily carried out through Semi-annual Progress Reports prepared by the Project Coordinator with the assistance of the three RfR National Coordinators. The donor organisations also arrange annual project visits. Accountability has been made more difficult by both major donors, EED and ICCO, having a high turnover of programme officers. In the case of EED, there have been three different programme officers over the space of less than three years and this has had a negative effect on the continuity of relationships that are important in such projects.

A number of **YMCA partners** provide funding and other support for the project and project-related activities in the local and national YMCAs. The relationships that some YMCA partners have with YMCAs in the region predate the RfR project so mechanisms for accountability were already in place. In general, accountability is organised through reports and account-keeping but primarily by ensuring that the project works to high standards.

#### 7.8.4 To whom are the implementing organisations accountable in theory and in practice and how is accountability guaranteed?

The implementing organisations for the project are the three YMCA national YMCAs of Georgia, Armenia and Nagorno Karabagh. The RfR project has implementation contracts with each. Accountability is organised through agreed workplans. Each of the movements has a National Coordinator employed by the national movement but paid for by the Roots for Reconciliation project. This arrangement means that the Project Coordinator does not have line management responsibility for the National Coordinators. In the case of Armenia and Georgia YMCAs, the National Coordinators are managed by the General Secretary. This arrangement requires very good working relationships between the Project Coordinator and the General Secretaries. In the case of Nagorno Karabagh, the National Coordinator is the General Secretary.

## 8. Conclusions and strategic challenges

This section seeks to draw conclusions from the assessment findings and to identify 'strategic challenges' – key questions concerning the longer-term development of the project and the YMCA national movements that require strategic responses. The section is structured using the headings established in the assessment Terms of Reference: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, flexibility, gender, impact, sustainability and transparency and accountability.

### 8.1 Relevance

Roots for Reconciliation is a well-designed project linking peace and reconciliation, young people's leadership development, and YMCA movement strengthening. Although its peace and reconciliation goals are very ambitious given the socio-political context in the south Caucasus, the approach taken is firmly rooted in the strengths of the YMCA as an organisation, the potential of the YMCA for strengthening democracy and the interests of young people living in the Region.

#### Strategic challenges

- a. How to strengthen relationships with other organisations carrying out peace and reconciliation work and work with young people in the region with a view to learning from experience and developing new partnerships?
- b. How to extend the work of the project to address new opportunities provided by changes in the geopolitical context? For example, how should the project respond to the very recent improvements in diplomatic and economic relations between Armenia and Turkey?

### 8.2 Effectiveness

The project has been very effective at **resource mobilisation** in terms of leveraging funding and drawing expertise into the YMCA movements in the Region.

**Cross-border co-operation** has undoubtedly been one of the major successes of the project. The project has not only organised 14 successful cross-border events in the period from January 2007 to July 2009 but it has also created a 'cross-border culture' in the YMCA movements in the region. This 'cross-border culture' extends beyond the events that bring people together. It operates at an individual level between participants (where participants from different countries are in constant contact with one another through the internet and SMS), at local YMCA level (for example, through camps arranged between local YMCAs in different countries) and at national level through shared training, meetings and a willingness to find ways of working together that extends beyond the 'boundaries' of the project.

The **peace and reconciliation** work of the project has been central to the project's identity. The project has taken an understandably cautious and measured approach to this sensitive work. As a result, the project has had significant success in bringing together young people from countries in conflict and transforming their understanding of each other and of themselves. Many of the participants have reported that the Roots for Reconciliation project has had a life-changing effect on them. The longer term effects will require time to understand, but the approach taken by the project has enabled groups of the young people who may become the leaders of tomorrow to develop mature relationships based on genuine friendship across borders that currently divide many of the older generation.

A further success of the project has been its contribution to **YMCA movement strengthening**. By providing leadership training, programme development (particularly using camping programmes), opportunities for collaboration and resource mobilisation, the project has strengthened capacity at individual, local and national levels. The delays in the development of the CRCs has in turn affected the contribution that the project will make to longer term movement sustainability in the Region. The most significant part of movement strengthening – developing financial sustainability – will have to wait until this crucial element is in place.

The main area where the project has not yet achieved its goals concerns the project's **outreach to communities**. Delays in the development of the four Community Resource Centres: two in Armenia, one in Georgia and one in Nagorno Karabagh. Circumstances

many of which were beyond the influence or control of the project, have slowed up the progress on these initiatives and whilst the two CRCs in Armenia are now nearing completion they were considerably delayed. The location of the CRC in Georgia had to be reconsidered and although progress is being made, it is unlikely to be ready until the end of 2010 at the earliest. Because of difficulties getting access to a suitable building, plans for the CRC in Nagorno Karabagh were changed and a non-residential office-cum-resource centre has been established.

#### Strategic challenges

- c. How to ensure that the participants maintain and develop their cross-border relationships and share their understanding in order to influence their friends, families and communities?
- d. How to continue to strengthen national movements so they are in the best possible position to ensure financial sustainability?
- e. How to reach out more to local communities around the CRCs and extend the opportunities that the project offers to the young people who are part of those communities?

### 8.3 Efficiency

The question of efficiency must be viewed against the backdrop of a project design that places significant emphasis on investment in the construction and/or refurbishment of Community Resource Centre buildings. The project management leadership at the regional and national levels need to utilise external expertise more in the future so that the demands of CRC construction and management do not detract valuable time and energy away from critical program activities

The figures for the project show that in the years 2007 and 2008, approximately 25% of the project expenditure was spent on events directly involving young people. If the investment in the Community Resource Centres during that period is removed from the equation, the amount spent on project events involving young people was still considerably less than half of the remaining expenditure.

#### Strategic challenges

- f. How to ensure that from the year 2010 onwards, the CRCs begin to provide demonstrable returns on investment.
- g. How to reduce the costs of involving young people in the work of the project in order to extend the project's reach.

### 8.4 Flexibility

The southern Caucasus provides an unpredictable and sometimes volatile environment for civil society organisations. This is particularly true for projects which focus on peace and reconciliation. Because of its international scale and reputation, the YMCA provides a high level of support and continuity when the context is unpredictable. In the face of very significant challenges over which it has had no control or influence (most notably the war between Russia and Georgia in 2008 and the global economic crisis of around the same time) the project has shown considerable flexibility in adapting to these challenges whilst also retaining its identity.

#### Strategic challenges

- h. How to respond to and, if possible, anticipate changes in the external environment that are likely to have an effect on the project's ability to achieve its work?
- i. How to ensure that the project remains flexible whilst keeping sight of its main objectives?

### 8.5 Gender

The project has been quite successful in taking a gender sensitive approach in its work with the project participants. Participant selection, event programming and providing a safe and supportive environment have all contributed to young women as well as young men feeling that they can contribute and benefit equally from the project.



### Strategic challenges

- j. How to build on the project's levels of gender sensitivity to encourage reflection and discussion of gender roles in the project, the YMCA and beyond?

## 8.6 Impact

The impact of a project that is still underway is difficult, if not impossible, to assess. This is particularly true of projects that have ambitious aims of bringing about peace and reconciliation in a region immersed in historical and current conflicts. At this stage in the life of the RfR project it is more appropriate to consider *outcomes* than impact.

The outcomes of the project's work with **individuals** can be clearly seen as growth in confidence and leadership skills; meaningful and sustained relationships with young people from other cultures based on tolerance and understanding; and more active engagement with their local YMCA using their new skills and knowledge.

The outcomes of the project's work with **communities** are less easy to find evidence for. There is evidence of the potential effect that the project can have on communities by looking at the work of the Daranak Community Resource Centre which works with refugee children in the local villages to provide popular classes and activities.

The outcome of the project's work with **other stakeholders** is limited. The project's understandable reluctance to raise its profile means that it has only limited contact with other civil society organisations working with young people on peace and reconciliation issues. As a result there is no evidence that partnerships or collaborative ventures involving the project and other stakeholders is under discussion or is underway.

### Strategic challenges

- k. How to enable participants to have a clear understanding of how their involvement in the RfR project and the YMCA can contribute to their personal and career development and what they, in return, can contribute. These plans should take into account the fact that some young people may temporarily leave the organisation due to changes in personal circumstances.
- l. How to strengthen work with communities?
- m. How to strengthen relationships with other organisations carrying out peace and reconciliation work and work with young people in the region with a view to learning from experience and developing new collaborative ventures?

## 8.7 Sustainability

The project has made considerable progress towards bringing about sustainable benefits for the target audiences by developing leadership skills, mobilising resources and establishing the capacity for cross-border work at national and local levels. The main piece of the sustainability puzzle that is not yet in place is the Community Resource Centre component.

### Strategic challenges

- n. Ensure that the experience and principles of the project are consolidated in the work of national and local YMCAs in the region and the work of YMCA Europe and beyond.
- o. Find ways of helping the national and local YMCAs to develop a business model that ensures that the Community Resource Centres provide a sustainable income stream.
- p. Find ways to further strengthen the 'absorption capacity' of national YMCA movements to help them make the most out of the financial resources that have been mobilised by the project.

## 8.8 Transparency and accountability

The project has benefited from excellent leadership from the Project Coordinator who has demonstrated dedication, insight, sensitivity, commitment and an ability to facilitate collaborative working relationships. These qualities have without doubt had a positive effect on the accountability Roots for Reconciliation project and its development.

The project's reporting system conforms to strict donor requirements and no concerns have been raised during this assessment about a lack of transparency concerning the use of project funds.

The project has a system for monitoring the achievement of project outputs using evaluations at the end of each event. These evaluations have become more sophisticated and there is now a greater emphasis on assessing whether the outcomes of the events have been achieved (not simply looking at the activities and outputs). The project would benefit from further strengthening of the recording and monitoring systems in order to make the best use of the management information for future planning.

As the CRCs are completed, the project will also need to consider how to involve local communities more in planning and monitoring the work of the project and the centres.

#### Strategic challenges

- q. How to strengthen accountability to project participants, for example by forming a 'user committee' comprising participants who are actively involved in the project and who can act as a representative voice for all participants.
- r. How to ensure that the project is accountable to the communities it is expected to serve. This will require close collaboration with the national and local YMCAs.
- s. How to strengthen the monitoring systems used by the project and adapt these so that they can help to build accountability and learning from experience.

## 9. Recommendations

This section contains a number of recommendations for each of the major stakeholder groups. The recommendations address the strategic challenges identified in Section 8.

The recommendations were discussed at the Program Forum meeting held in Yerevan in October/November 2009.

### 9.1 YMCA Europe

- a. Establish an action group to prepare a formal response to this report and coordinate action on agreed recommendations.
- b. Continue to build on the achievements of the Roots for Reconciliation project in the region and elsewhere by taking a more programmatic<sup>11</sup> approach to Roots for Reconciliation in the future.
- c. Consolidate the changes made by the project through the YMCA 'movement development' process in the forthcoming YMCA 'movement strengthening' process.
- d. Identify more opportunities for cross-border cooperation between YMCAs outside the South Caucasus region in order to build on the successes of the project.
- e. Foster co-operation with international organisations such as the International Awards Association in order to explore possibilities for extending the work of the project in Turkey and Azerbaijan.
- f. In any future regional YMCA projects consider creating a formal steering group involving representatives from each of the involved national YMCAs in order to support project implementation and monitoring.
- g. Ensure that future regional project proposals include budgets for adequate levels of staffing to provide the administrative resources required for managing projects of this scale.
- h. Ensure that the logframes for future projects include a clear statement of the problem situation that the project is intended to address and indicators that make it easier to monitor and evaluate progress.

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<sup>11</sup> By programmatic is meant moving away from an 'events' approach towards an approach that aims to support the integration of peace and reconciliation and movement strengthening into the regular programme activities of the local and national YMCAs.

## 9.2 Roots for Reconciliation Project

- j. Develop a plan for the year of extension funding (2010) with clear objectives and targets concerning sustainability of project benefits.
- k. Link the proposed 'competitive application process' for deciding allocation of project resources and provision of support to national YMCA strategy development to capacity-building where necessary. This will help to ensure that national YMCAs can make best use of available funding and strengthen their capacities for sustainability.
- l. Investigate the possibilities of extending the work of the project to address other peace and reconciliation issues. For example, the project should continue its work building relations with YMCA Russia. Consideration should be given to extend the project to involve participants from Turkey in order to respond to the current improvements in diplomatic and economic relations between Armenia and Turkey. In any such development the 'Do No Harm' principle should always be applied.
- m. Build stronger relationships with other projects and organisations in the Region working with youth and with peace and reconciliation issues for the purposes of mutual learning and potential partnerships.
- n. Create a 'participant committee' comprising participants who are actively involved in the project and who can act as a direct voice in the project for all participants.
- o. Recognise all the participants as project resources who could be asked to play a more active role in identifying and working on project-related issues between the events, reach out and influence others and generally help to further strengthen the YMCA movement in the region.
- p. Develop a gender policy that encourages reflection and discussion on gender roles in the project, the YMCA and beyond.
- q. Develop a more rigorous electronic record-keeping system to enable easier monitoring of the project's progress. Ensure that the monitoring is gender sensitive.
- r. Develop an internet presence to act as a hub for communication with and between participants. If possible, the YMCA corporate website should be extended to host this communication hub so that project participants feel part of the wider YMCA movement.

## 9.3 National YMCAs

- a. Each national YMCA should update its strategic plan to incorporate lessons learned from the experience of working with the RfR project.
- b. National YMCAs should assess what organisational and management capacities still need to be strengthened in order to take on a more proactive role and ensure sustainability.<sup>12</sup>
- c. The completion of the Community Resource Centres should be seen as a priority. Plans for marketing the CRCs should be developed as a key part of each national YMCA movement's strategy for sustainability.
- d. Where needed, there should be clarification about the ownership of the CRCs as assets. Clear procedures will be needed for marketing and using the CRC and how the income generated will be divided. Procedures should be agreed for each CRC as part of a business plan. The business plans should encourage the year-round use of the centres.
- e. Explore ways of ensuring the Community Resource Centres take an environmentally sensitive and sustainable approach to electricity generation, hot water heating, water supply and sewage disposal. Technologies used should be low impact and, wherever possible, self-build to reduce costs.

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<sup>12</sup> An Organisational Self-Assessment tool could be used by each of the national movements for this purpose.

## Assessment of YMCA 'Roots for Reconciliation' Project

- f. Organise training in environmentally sustainable practices for leaders and volunteers in order to raise the level of awareness and understanding about the importance of these issues.
- g. Consider using the CRCs as centres for practical environmental education including courses on the construction of sustainable hot water and electricity generation systems.
- h. To ensure that the maximum use is made of its CRCs, YMCA Armenia should seek professional help for developing and marketing its camping programme. The person involved should have excellent strategic thinking and marketing skills.
- i. YMCA Georgia should seek professional help for mobilising resources for the CRC and oversight of the CRC construction as a project. The consultant should have a proven track record in resource mobilisation and project management.
- j. Funding for the professional help referred to in points h and i. above should be made available through the RfR project 'competitive application process' which will be introduced in 2010.
- k. Establish a management structure in each national YMCA to oversee the finalisation and use of the Community Resource Centres. National YMCAs should also consider co-opting experts as advisers to these bodies.

### 9.4 Local YMCAs

- a. Sustain and extend the local-to-local YMCA relationships both in-country and cross-border that have been built as a result of the RfR project.
- b. Take a strategic approach to the selection of participants for project events as part of a strategy for leadership development.
- c. Ensure that every young volunteer and leader has an individual development plan so that they are helped to develop a longer term commitment to their local YMCA. Each young leader should be allocated an experienced mentor who can guide their development and discuss their ambitions on a regular basis.
- d. Consider setting up an 'exchange' system whereby young leaders from one country can work alongside leaders from another country to organise and run camps and other activities for children.

## 10. List of Appendices

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## Appendix One: Terms Of Reference of the External Assessment of The YMCA Europe Roots for Reconciliation Project

|                                   |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| <b>Project Name:</b>              | Roots for Reconciliation   |
| <b>Project Period:</b>            | January the 1 <sup>st</sup> , 2007 – December the 31 <sup>st</sup> , 2009  |
| <b>Project Location:</b>          | Predominantly Caucasus (Armenia, Georgia, Karabagh), partially Europe (Italy, Czech Republic, etc.)                  |
| <b>Implementing Organization:</b> | European Alliance of YMCAs (YMCA Europe) in cooperation with YMCA Armenia, YMCA Georgia and YMCA in Nagorno Karabagh |
| <b>Main Donor:</b>                | EED – Germany (Ref. 2006 0307 G)<br>ICCO – Netherlands (Ref. AM004031)   |
| <b>Other Stakeholders:</b>        | HEKS / EPER Switzerland, YMCA of Germany, YMCA Netherlands, YMCA of the USA etc.                                     |

### Background

The project Roots for Reconciliation (hereafter RfR) with planned budget at minimum € 570'000 is initiated by the YMCA Europe for the benefit of its member and cooperating Movements in the Caucasus region.

The project is to promote participatory democracy building and peaceful transformation of the conflicts in the region of Caucasus as its developmental goal.

The specific project objective set to be achieved within its implementation period (i.e. 2007 – 2009) is as follows: through developing camping programme as a strong and tested leadership and cooperation building facility and measure, to further strengthen and extend the YMCA Movement in the Caucasus, as a mass-membership, ecumenical network standing for integrity of creation, peace and justice.

In order to reach the above project objective the YMCA Europe in cooperation with the YMCA Movements in the region and other international and local partner organisations are to secure the achievement of the following intermediate results:

1. To open and build up relevant capacities within the targeted Movements through delivering series of training and support measures in form of:

Annual Training Programme Developer (hereafter TPD) seminars to be held each Spring enrolling up to 30 participants and with expected result to develop human resources within the targeted Movements for effective project planning, implementation and monitoring in general, the scheduled RfR sub-project components in particular.

Annual YMCA Europe General Assemblies (hereafter GA) normally taking place in Spring and for the framework of the RfR also providing platform for regular meetings of the representatives from each targeted Movement and their YMCA partners, through this securing stakeholder participatory and considered review of the implemented or preparation of the identified sub-project components.

Annual Programme Forums (hereafter PF) to be held each Fall enrolling up to 30 local and international participants and with expected result to evaluate the results and display the best practices so far, as well as to provide platform for coordination and consolidation of partner commitments towards further project delivery and supplementary measures.

2. To develop the YMCA profile and capacities in camping programme on the one hand, in conflict prevention / resolution work on the other, through organizing Reunion sub-projects in form of residential youth camps, festivals, conferences, etc.(including prior leader training / preparation schemes), within the

interconnected thematic priorities specified for each year of the project implementation, namely:

"Integration" for 2007, meaning that the targeted YMCA Movements are internalizing the RfR implementation logic and methodology through cross-border joint efforts.

"Civic Participation" for 2008, meaning that the targeted YMCA Movements are further enhancing civic engagement and networking within the project especially through adequate responses to the acute challenges faced by their individual societies or shared by the entire region.

"Conflict Resolution" for 2009, meaning that all the implementing parties within the RfR have geared up resource mobilization capacities and developmental approaches enabling them to successfully apply joint efforts in transferring resources towards the critical need of conflict prevention and transformation in the region.

3. To establish YMCA Community Resource Centres (hereafter CRC) providing cost-effective venue for Reunion sub-projects within this project, the YMCA camping and youth tourism self-sustainable network in supplement, simultaneously serving as YMCA day centres for youth from the marginalized communities where those facilities are located:

In Armenia the construction / renovation works in both the CRCs (Pambak, Daranak) are to be completed, and the facilities are to be equipped and furnished ready for full operation based on business plans developed and approved.

In Georgia potential location of a CRC is to be identified and obtained, feasibility studies conducted and developmental plan worked out and set up.

In Nagorno Karabagh potential location of a CRC is to be identified and obtained, feasibility studies conducted and developmental plan worked out and set up.

However it is important to accent that the achievement of the above project developmental goal, specific objective and results great deal is subject to the given economic and political context in the targeted region. They cannot but be especially in interaction with certain factors like the process of the settlement or aggravation of the frozen armed conflicts in the region and beyond it, as well as the economic and administration environment where the operations are carried out.

The recent Georgia Crisis once again came to prove that the Caucasus remains a dangerous mine of inter-ethnic conflicts, with a vast number of very sensitive detonators originating from within the history of the region or from the contemporary geopolitical developments. It clearly showed that the conflicts in the Caucasus may have consequences well beyond the regional scale. Sustainable solution of those conflicts remains an imperative for the global security. Yet prior to any final resolution aspirations on those disputes, it is an imperative to look back to the roots for reconciliation – i.e. to tolerance, compassion and confidence building measures especially amongst the generations to come. Thus the YMCA Europe RfR with its internal and external networks and resource mobilisation capacities already in place remains a most appropriate respond tool. Scenario building and contingency planning for such situations have been part of the project's logical plan and within its logical framework it managed to expand for new dimensions emerging from the contextual changes. Yet the aggravated tensions in the region, coupled with the global economic crises, are having life changing affect on the people. It still remains a question how far this dangerous tandem may reach, but two things are obvious: (a) none of the economies in the Caucasus is prepared to withstand if serious economic downturn; (b) and such dire straits may well feed nationalism and xenophobia as side effects. As mentioned above such a scenario undoubtedly will have serious influence on the context of the RfR, deriving new challenges for the key aspects of its implementation logic, areas of resource mobilisation, cross-border cooperation, and peace work especially considered.

### **Assessment Purpose And Expected Results**

The primary purpose of this facilitated self-assessment of the programme is to review the RfR inputs and strategies utilised so far, and through contextual analyses refine whether the project intermediate results and specific objective are achieved or likely to be achieved and how far they are to promote the developmental goal set? The main instrumental purpose of the facilitated self-evaluation is the formulation and documentation of Best

Practices derived from the programme, to be used as a basis for re-defining the future strategy on regional strategy.

The YMCA Europe would like to see this assessment process to be not only as participatory as possible, but to be a facilitated process where YMCA staff themselves work on defining Best Practices and elements for improvement. The process should involve all the levels engaged into the project implementation, namely: international – i.e. YMCA Europe, national – i.e. YMCA Armenia, YMCA Georgia and in YMCA Nagorno Karabagh and local. These different stakeholders are aimed to be mobilised through the assessment process in order to creatively contribute to the improvement of the quality, effectiveness, sustainability and relevance of the programme.

We stimulate that the results of the assessment are used by all the project stakeholders, in the following ways:

- Instrumental use: the results of the assessment are used to weigh the usefulness of operations and the results to feed into the further planning process of this specific initiative.
- Conceptual use: the results are reflected within the context of the organisation's general operations giving way to new visions, ideas, concepts and possibly structured plans.

Given the current strategic priorities of the YMCA Europe, we are especially interested in quality assessment on the project best practices in areas of (a) Resource Mobilisation, (b) Regional / cross-border cooperation (c) Peace work and would like to document substantial recommendations on how to mainstream these best practices within the YMCA Movement in the future.

Simultaneously we would like to have specific evaluation data on the project components, which have been sub-contracted to the National YMCAs in the region with significant funding earmarked. To this end the YMCA CRCs are to be specially considered, including (a) the technical quality of their construction / reconstruction (wherever applicable), and (b) their social and economic market efficiency. It is important that this part of the assessment is done by independent external expert and therefore, it will be a separately defined part of the assessment process.

### **Assessment Methodology, Level And Criteria**

Hereby are the three areas of focus of the assessment: (a) Resource Mobilisation – strengths and weaknesses, (b) Regional / cross-border cooperation – Best Practices (c) Peace work – Best Practices.

As mentioned above the YMCA Europe expects that the main part of this assessment is highly participatory, externally facilitated self-assessment process involving all the levels engaged by the project, with the expert (organisation) acting rather as a facilitator of this process, then as an expert or advisor.

The following levels of impact assessment are to be considered in each of the three pre-determined areas of focus:

- Individual Impact: Assuming individual case studies and testimonies from the project participants and leaders.
- Community impact: Assuming analyses of the project outputs that have influenced services and collaborations within the targeted communities and created social and economic opportunities for them.
- Institutional Impact: Assuming analyses of the project outputs that have influenced the YMCA Movement Strengthening process in the region.

Below are the indicators that should be mainstreamed through analysing each criterion.

- Relevance: whether the activities and programme goals reflect the need of a certain part of civil society vis a vis a given context analyses.
- Efficiency: whether the same results could have been achieved at lower costs or whether there were more appropriate ways (financial perspective, management perspective, etc) of achieving the same or better results?



- Effectiveness: whether the activities and the programme resulted in the changes which it anticipated to contribute to, and whether the actual implementation and methodological approaches within this project are in accordance with its developmental goal and specific objective?
- Flexibility: whether the project was enough proactive to respond to its changing context? What is the effect of external influences on the achievement of results?
- Sustainability: Whether the flow of benefits to the beneficiaries and to society in general are likely to continue after completion of the project or not and why?
- Transparency and Accountability: Whether the use of funds or the functioning of the organisation is transparent? To whom are the implementing organisations accountable in theory and practice and how do they guarantee this?
- Gender: Whether the programming and implementation takes into account gender-balance?

### Assessment Tools, Timing And Responsibilities

The contracted expert (organisation) is to be accountable to the YMCA Europe and is to execute the assignment to the best of its abilities. The expert is to design appropriate methodologies for group-self-assessment as a learning process and as an interim self-assessment process of the programme's stakeholders and to facilitate and organise the process of self-evaluation in a relevant way. The result of this self-assessment process should be a well documented Lessons learned and Best Practices document. YMCA Europe contracts the expert (organisation) on the above terms and expects appropriate qualifications to facilitate this participatory assessment process with proper tools offered and applied.

The RfR team will be in assistance provided site visits, meetings, etc. are needed to this end. Simultaneously we recommend the below activities scheduled within the implementation plan of the project as providing special opportunity for active interactions with the project caseload and thus carrying out this assessment through it.

June 20 – 27, Nagorno Karabagh: Regional Reunion.

August 24 – 30, Armenia: Regional Programme Festival.

September - October (tentative), Georgia: Regional Reunion.

October - November (tentative), Armenia: Regional Programme Forum, where we expect to have the concluding assessment workshop.

### Deliverables And Follow Up

We schedule to conclude the assessment latest by November 2009, with the main deliverable of this assessment - the Assessment Report – published and including the following content components:

- An executive summary which can be used independently (maximum 5 pages).
- Explanation of the evaluation methods used and justification of selections made.
- Summary presentation of the findings based on qualitative and quantitative analysis.
- Instrumental conclusions, with reference to the impact indicators;
- Specified conceptual recommendations for different project stakeholders.
- Annexes, including this Terms of Reference, list of persons interviewed, places visited, sample questionnaire, interview guide or topic list, (statistical analysis), the overall assessment as well as the specific concluding workshop programmes (dates and activities), concepts and abbreviation list, and the list of documents / literature used.

The report should be written in English, in clear and accessible language, with references to sources of information (interviews, reports and project documentation) and with a

## Assessment of YMCA 'Roots for Reconciliation' Project

structure where conclusions follow the findings, and recommendations follow the conclusions logically.

## Appendix Two: Members of the RfR Assessment Team

|                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| Asoyan, Anahit          | YMCA of Armenia  |
| Gogatishvili, Nona      | YMCA of Georgia  |
| Harutyunyan, Anna       | YMCA of Armenia  |
| Harutyunyan, Asya       | YMCA of Armenia  |
| Karapetyan, Haykuhi     | YMCA of Armenia  |
| Minasyan, Tatev         | YMCA of Armenia  |
| Movsisyan, Yuliana      | YMCA of Armenia  |
| Nazaryan, Ani           | YMCA of Armenia  |
| Saiyan, Susanna         | YMCA in Nagorno Karabagh   |
| Samadbegishvili, Sandro | YMCA of Georgia  |
| Sarkisyan, Zoya         | YMCA in Nagorno Karabagh   |
| Shamugia, Giorgi        | YMCA of Georgia  |
| Vardanyan, Lusine       | YMCA of Armenia  |
| Vardanyan, Maria        | YMCA of Armenia  |
| Zalyan, Ofelya          | YMCA of Armenia  |
| Bardakchyan, Ghazaros   | Program Secretary, YMCA Armenia and RfR National Coordinator                       |
| Melkumyan, David        | President, YMCA in Nagorno Karabagh and RfR National Coordinator                   |
| Shavladze, Revaz        | Program Secretary, YMCA Georgia and RfR National Coordinator                       |
| Hambardzumyan, Vardan   | Regional Development Secretary, YMCA Europe and RfR Regional Programme Coordinator |
| Britton, Bruce          | Framework Consultant   |

## Appendix Three: Job Descriptions for Assessment Team Members and National Coordinators

### Introduction

The commissioning organisation, YMCA Europe, specified in the terms of reference for the evaluation of the Roots for Reconciliation project that the evaluation should be "highly participatory, externally facilitated self-assessment process involving all the levels engaged by the project, with the expert (organisation) acting rather as a facilitator of this process".

The reason for this is that the evaluation should be consistent with the values that underpin the project; the evaluation process itself should build capacity and thus contribute to greater sustainability of the project activities after the initial funding comes to an end.

In order to make the most efficient use of limited resources and to ensure high levels of participation, the data collection and analysis for the evaluation will be carried out by an Assessment Team of about 20 persons comprising the RfR project manager and staff, volunteer leaders, EED Support Worker and the Framework consultant.

For the evaluation to be genuinely participatory it will be the Assessment Team collectively that will be responsible for data gathering, initial analysis of data and writing sections of the evaluation report under the guidance of the Steering Group.

In order not to overstretch the time availability of staff and volunteers, it will be important to make the best use of the natural meeting moments (Reunions) within the programme for planning, data gathering, data analysis and feedback.

This document aims to clarify the proposed roles of the YMCA staff and volunteers who will comprise the Assessment Team. The job descriptions are subdivided into the main phases of the evaluation process.

### Job Description for Assessment Team member

#### 1. Summary of responsibilities

1. Be an active member of the Assessment Team
2. Help with the design of the evaluation (Ureki Reunion)
3. Do interviews and questionnaires with Project Participants, Local YMCA leaders and others (Data gathering and recording), gather testimonials from participants. Prepare the interview records in electronic version, send the records your national coordinator (in the case of questionnaires) and to your national coordinator with a copy to Bruce (in the case of interviews and testimonials)
4. Delegation participates in the Programme Forum 'Analysis Session' in November 2009

#### 2. Evaluation design

- 2.1 Attend the Framework Reunion meeting in Ureki, Georgia in July 2009
- 2.2 Understand the RfR project design and history
- 2.3 Contribute to the design of the assessment tools by active participation in the Framework Reunion

#### 3. Data gathering and recording

- 3.1 Do **interviews** with **project participants** using the interview protocol (the protocol and a list with the names/contact details of the people to interview will be sent to you by your national coordinator).

*WHO?* All interviewers

- 3.2 Do **questionnaire** interviews with **project participants** using the interview questionnaire (the protocol and a list with the names/contact details of the people to interview will be sent to you by your national coordinator).

WHO? All interviewers

3.3 Gather **testimony** from **project participants** using agreed guidelines (the guidelines and a list with the names/contact details of the people to interview will be sent to you by your national coordinator).

3.4 WHO? Selected interviewers

3.5 Do **interviews** with **local YMCA leaders** using the interview protocol (the protocol and a list with the names/contact details of the people to interview will be sent to you by your national coordinator).

WHO? Selected interviewers

3.6 Do **interviews** with **national YMCA leaders** and/or **national coordinators**, using the interview protocol (the protocols and a list with the names/contact details of the people to interview will be sent to you by your national coordinator).

WHO? Selected interviewers

3.7 Gather and type the **interviews** and **testimonies in English** into Word **before 11 September, 2009** (you will be given instructions in which form to make the Word documents which will be sent to you by your national coordinator)

3.8 Send the electronic version of completed **questionnaires in English** to your National Coordinator ([lazarus@ymca.am](mailto:lazarus@ymca.am), [tbiliscity@ymca.ge](mailto:tbiliscity@ymca.ge) , [mdav@rambler.ru](mailto:mdav@rambler.ru)) before **31 August 2009**.

3.9 Send the electronic version of **interviews** and **testimonies** to your National Coordinator with a copy to Bruce Britton ([bruce@framework.org.uk](mailto:bruce@framework.org.uk)) before **11 September 2009**.

#### 4. Participate in Programme Forum 'Analysis Session' in November 2009

4.1 If delegated, participate in the November 2009 Programme Forum and play an active role in the 'Lessons Learned' workshop.

WHO? Three Delegated participants

#### Job Description for National Coordinator

This assignment will be carried out in parallel to the normal job responsibilities of the National Coordinator.

##### 1. Overall responsibilities

1. Be an active member of the Assessment Team
2. Help with the design of the evaluation (Ureki Reunion)
3. Data Gathering and Provide guidance and back up support to the volunteers involved in the Assessment Team
4. Be responsible for the pre-processing of the data gathered by assessment team members using questionnaires
5. Draft the agreed sections of the report in the agreed timeframe
6. Actively participate in the Programme Forum 'Analysis Session' in November 2009 and to comment on the draft evaluation report

##### 2. Evaluation design

- 2.1 Facilitate the attendance of the project volunteers at the Framework Reunion meeting in Georgia in July 2009
- 2.2 Attend the Framework Reunion meeting in Ureki in July 2009
- 2.3 Reconnect with the RfR project design by reading through project documentation prior to the Reunion meeting
- 2.4 Contribute to the design of the evaluation by active participation in the Framework Reunion

- 2.5 Agree a data-gathering plan for conducting interviews, questionnaires, testimonies and possible other data gathering

### 3. Data gathering and recording

- 3.1 Make a **general information list** of all previous **RfR participants**: (the list should provide the following data: name participant, RfR events attended, where is this person now + contact information like e-mail and telephone number, local YMCA, etc). Kindly use the format for the list which can be found in the attachment. Send the lists to Bruce ([bruce@framework.org.uk](mailto:bruce@framework.org.uk)) before the end of the day on **July 24<sup>th</sup> 2009**.
- 3.2 On this basis, write **individual lists** for each assessment team member in your country of the participants to be contacted (an example list can be found in the attachment). The **number of interviews** for each interviewer is as follows: 2/3 for Armenia , 5/6 for Karabagh, 5 for Georgia. The **number of questionnaires** for each interviewer is as follows: 6/7 for Armenia, 17 for Karabagh, 10 for Georgia. The **number of testimonies** for each interviewer is as follows: 3 for Armenia, 3 for Karabagh and 3 for Georgia.
- 3.3 The **completed individual lists** have **to be sent** to each assessment team member before the end of the day on **26<sup>th</sup> of July 2009**.
- 3.4 Have the interview protocols for local YMCAs translated from English to your local language. For Armenian, the national coordinator for Armenia is asked to arrange for the translation and to share the translated protocol with his colleague from Karabagh. For Georgian, the national coordinator is asked to arrange for the translation. The protocols should be translated before **August 1<sup>st</sup> 2009** and shared with the assessment team members who will do the interview with local YMCA leadership.
- 3.5 Select interviewer(s) (ideally two) for each **local YMCA** who can interview the local YMCA leadership together and add the local leadership's contact details to the individual lists.
- 3.6 **Select two interviewers** who can interview the **national YMCA leadership** and add the national leadership's contact details to the individual lists. It is assumed that the interview protocols do not have to be translated in this case. The answers can be either translated to English or directly given in English.
- 3.7 **Select two interviewers** who can interview the **national coordinators** and add the national coordinator's contact details to the individual lists. It is assumed that the interview protocols do not have to be translated in this case. The answers can be either translated to English or directly given in English.
- 3.8 Ensure that volunteers carry out their responsibilities in the agreed timeframe (they have to send you the questionnaires before 31<sup>st</sup> August 2009 and have to send you the testimonies and interviews before 11<sup>th</sup> September 2009), by providing regular guidance and support (you can contact them once in while to ask how the data gathering process is going and provide support when an interviewer feels stuck). As a back up support for you, you can contact Bruce ([bruce@framework.org.uk](mailto:bruce@framework.org.uk), skype: brucebritton), Vardan ([eay@netsys.am](mailto:eay@netsys.am), skype: vardan.ymcaeuropa, +374 (91) 402 991) or Nele ([dialogue.nele@ctc.org.ge](mailto:dialogue.nele@ctc.org.ge), skype: eedialogue, +995 (8)91 337372).
- 3.9 Monitor the progress with the implementation of the plan and take action needed to keep to the timeframe. Bring any problems to the attention of Bruce and Vardan.
- 3.10 When Bruce needs documents from the national coordinators, he will contact you directly.
- 3.11 In the case of **Karabagh**; the national coordinator will do **interviews** with **project stakeholders** using an interview protocol (the protocol will be sent to you by Bruce). The protocols will need to be translated to Armenian. The national coordinators of Armenia and Karabagh YMCA are asked to help each other with the translation of the protocols (by finding volunteers to translate).

4. Data analysis

- a. Analyse data from individual questionnaires using the excel spreadsheet (the spreadsheet will be send to you by Bruce)
- b. Send the pre-processed data from the **questionnaires** to Bruce before **5<sup>th</sup> September 2009**

5. Report writing

- 5.1 Each national coordinator drafts certain sections of the evaluation report (a format with explanations how to draft the report sections will be sent to you by Bruce).
- 5.2 Provide elaborate **comments** to the different versions of the **draft report**. The first draft will be sent to you before **20<sup>th</sup> October 2009**.

6. Participate in Programme Forum 'Analysis Session' in November 2009

- 6.1 Participate in the November 2009 Programme Forum and play an active role in the 'Lessons Learned' workshop.

7. Follow up on the evaluation

- 7.1 Write, together with the YMC Europe Regional Secretary a comment to the evaluation report and design a plan for following up the recommendations to the evaluation.
- 7.2 Seek support within the national and local YMCAs to contribute to the follow up of the recommendations.

## Appendix Four: Project Timeline 2007-2009

| Activities in Year 1 (January - December 2007)                               | Months |     |     |       |       |     |     |       |     |      |     |     |
|--|--------|-----|-----|-------|-------|-----|-----|-------|-----|------|-----|-----|
|  | JAN    | FEB | MAR | APR   | MAY   | JUN | JUL | AUG   | SEP | OCT  | NOV | DEC |
| Training Programme Developers (Yerevan, Armenia)                             |        |     |     | 12-16 |       |     |     |       |     |      |     |     |
| Sub-project Selection Meeting / YMCA Europe General Assembly (Kiev, Ukraine) |        |     |     |       | 13-20 |     |     |       |     |      |     |     |
| Pambak Reunion (YMCA Camp Pambak, Armenia)                                   |        |     |     |       |       |     |     | 7-14  |     |      |     |     |
| Kojori Reunion (Kojori, Georgia)   |        |     |     |       |       |     |     | 14-21 |     |      |     |     |
| Programme Forum (Stepanakert, Karabagh)                                      |        |     |     |       |       |     |     |       |     | 5-11 |     |     |



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| Activities in Year 2 (January - December 2008)  | Months |     |     |      |       |       |      |     |     |      |       |     |
|---|--------|-----|-----|------|-------|-------|------|-----|-----|------|-------|-----|
|   | JAN    | FEB | MAR | APR  | MAY   | JUN   | JUL  | AUG | SEP | OCT  | NOV   | DEC |
| Leader Training "TenSing as a Tool of Civic Participation" (Camp Pambak, Armenia)       |        |     |     | 7-12 |       |       |      |     |     |      |       |     |
| Sub-project Selection Meeting / YMCA Europe General Assembly (Litomysl, Czech Republic) |        |     |     | 30-4 |       |       |      |     |     |      |       |     |
| Training Programme Developers (Yerevan, Armenia)  |        |     |     |      | 12-19 |       |      |     |     |      |       |     |
| Reunion "Cultural Expression as a Tool of Civic Participation" (Shushi, Karabagh)       |        |     |     |      |       | 20-27 |      |     |     |      |       |     |
| Leader Training "Philia for Caucasus" (Poggio Mirteto, Italy)                           |        |     |     |      |       |       | 23-2 |     |     |      |       |     |
| Reunion "Real Life" (Prague, Czech Republic)  |        |     |     |      |       |       |      | 3-9 |     |      |       |     |
| Reunion "Caucasus Local-to-Local" (Tbilisi, Georgia)                                    |        |     |     |      |       |       |      |     |     | 5-12 |       |     |
| Programme Forum (Tbilisi, Georgia)  |        |     |     |      |       |       |      |     |     |      | 21-23 |     |

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| Activities in Year 3 (January - December 2009)                                 | Months |     |     |     |       |       |       |       |     |      |     |     |
|--|--------|-----|-----|-----|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|------|-----|-----|
|  | JAN    | FEB | MAR | APR | MAY   | JUN   | JUL   | AUG   | SEP | OCT  | NOV | DEC |
| Training Programme Developers (Sighnaghi, Georgia)                             |        |     |     | 2-6 |       |       |       |       |     |      |     |     |
| Sub-project Selection Meeting / YMCA Europe General Assembly (Dassel, Germany) |        |     |     |     | 18-25 |       |       |       |     |      |     |     |
| Reunion "Back to Shushi" (Shushi, Karabagh)                                    |        |     |     |     |       | 20-27 |       |       |     |      |     |     |
| Reunion "Framework" (Ureki, Georgia)   |        |     |     |     |       |       | 15-21 |       |     |      |     |     |
| Reunion "ProFest" (Yerevan, Armenia)   |        |     |     |     |       |       |       | 24-30 |     |      |     |     |
| Programme Forum (Yerevan, Armenia)   |        |     |     |     |       |       |       |       |     | 30-2 |     |     |

## Appendix Five: Officials Interviewed for the Assessment

### Roots for Reconciliation National Coordinators

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| Bardakchyan, Ghazaros | Program Secretary, YMCA Armenia and RfR National Coordinator     |
| Melkumyan, David      | President, YMCA in Nagorno Karabagh and RfR National Coordinator |
| Shavladze, Revaz      | Program Secretary, YMCA Georgia and RfR National Coordinator     |

### YMCA Europe

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| Guskov, Mikhail       | Regional Development Secretary for Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova, YMCA Europe |
| Hambardzumyan, Vardan | Regional Development Secretary, YMCA Europe and RfR Regional Programme Coordinator   |
| Hlavsá. Radek         | Bookkeeper, YMCA Europe now Marketing and Communication Officer, YMCA Europe         |
| Lukina, Olga          | Assessor, YMCA Europe  |
| Szymanczak, Michal    | Deputy Secretary General, YMCA Europe  |

### YMCA Partners

|                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| Merino, Rodrigo Antonio | Global Education Specialist, International Group, YMCA of the USA  |
| Valentine, Tom          | Senior Associate Director, International Group, YMCA of the USA and member of the Field Group of YMCA of Georgia |

### International Partners

|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| Boltze, Ilonka    | Programme Officer, EED  |
| Cruckow, Caroline | EED (Programme Officer involved in earlier stages of RfR)       |
| De Meyer, Nele    | Coordinator, EED Dialogue and Support Office for South Caucasus |

### National YMCAs

|                  |                                 |
|------------------|---------------------------------|
| Bezhanyan, Armen | Secretary General, YMCA Armenia |
| Chikhradze, Gela | General Secretary, YMCA Georgia |

### Local YMCAs

|                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| Hakobyan, Karen          | Board Member, Spitak YMCA, Armenia   |
| Petrosyan, Martin        | Director, Ozone YMCA, Armenia  |
| Vardanyan, Lusine        | Acting Executive Director, Yerevan YMCA, Armenia                           |
| Zalyan, Ofelya           | Youth Program Manager and Aramaian Center Director, YMCA Vanadzor, Armenia |
| Abramishvili, Paata      | Staff Member, Telavi YMCA, Georgia   |
| Chachkhunashvili, Giorgi | Board Chairman, Tbilisi YMCA, Georgia                                      |
| Surmanidze, Maia         | Executive Director, Batumi YMCA, Georgia                                   |
| Arakelyan, Armen         | YMCA Artsakh, Nagorno Karabagh   |
| Arakelyan, Hasmik        | YMCA Artsakh, Nagorno Karabagh   |
| Galstyan, Luse           | YMCA Artsakh, Nagorno Karabagh   |

## Appendix Six: Documents and Publications Consulted

- Daranak Community Resource Center Intermediary Report 2009 June-September
- EED PME Organisational Profile of European Alliance of YMCAs, Undated
- European Alliance of YMCAs 'Roots for Reconciliations (programme Proposal for Caucasus Region) Undated
- Generation Next for Peace and Justice (EAY Programme for Caucasus 07-09) Logframe, Undated
- King, Charles (2008) The Ghost of Freedom: A History of the Caucasus, New Yor: Oxford University Press
- LPI (2008) New Routes: Reflections on Peacebuilding Evaluation, New Routes Volume 13 No3, Uppsala, Sweden, Life and Peace Institute.
- RFR Annual Progress Report (January-December 2008)
- RFR Semi-annual Progress Report (January-December 2007)
- RFR Semi-annual Progress Report (January-June 2007)
- RFR Semi-annual Progress Report (January-June 2008)
- Summary Evaluations of all Reunions and TPD Events
- Wardlow, Michael (2002) Begleitung: A Case for Modelling Good Practice in Community Work, YMCA Europe, <http://www.ymcaeurope.com/attach/saphir.pdf>
- Wardlow, Michael (undated) External Assessment of the ICCO/EAY Initiative for Armenia, 2004-6
- YMCA Europe Roots for Reconciliation, Annual Progress Report, January-December 2008.
- YMCA Global Service-Learning: Youth Development Through Community Leadership, YMCA of the USA International Group

## Appendix Seven: Sample Participant Questionnaire



### Participant Questionnaire

You have been asked to complete this questionnaire because you are (or you were) a participant in the Roots for Reconciliation (RfR) project. The questionnaire is an important part of the project assessment. The findings of the assessment will help us to learn and improve the future work of the national and local YMCA movements in the Caucasus.

Thank you for agreeing to contribute to the project assessment. Your views are important to us!

1. Name (optional)
2. Date of Birth
3. Sex
4. Nationality
5. Local YMCA
6. National YMCA

|   |   |                        |
|---|---|------------------------|
| 7. What is your current involvement in YMCA (please tick) |   |                        |
| 7.1 Paid staff  | 7.2 Volunteer (including Board members) | 7.3 No longer involved |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| 8. Which of the following RfR Events (reunions or camps) have you attended? Please tick. |  |
| TPD May 2007 Yerevan, Armenia  |  |
| Reunion July 2007 Camp Vanadzor, Armenia   |  |
| Reunion August 2007 Kojori, Georgia  |  |
| Programme Forum October 2007 Stepanakerk, Nagorno Karabagh                               |  |
| Camp Leader Training March 2008 Camp Vanadzor, Armenia                                   |  |
| TPD May 2008 Yerevan, Armenia  |  |
| Reunion June 2008 Shushi Nagorno Karabagh  |  |
| Camp Leader Training July 2008 Poggio, Italy   |  |
| Reunion August 2008 Prague, Czech Republic   |  |
| Reunion October 2008 Tbilisi, Georgia  |  |
| Programme Forum November 2008 Tbilisi, Georgia   |  |
| TPD April 2009 Signaghi, Georgia   |  |
| Reunion June 2009 Shushi, Nagorno Karabagh   |  |
| Reunion July 2009 Ureki, Georgia   |  |

9. To what extent do you feel part of the RfR Project?

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|                                       |   |   |   |  |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|---|--|
| I do not feel part of the RfR project |   |   |   | I feel very strongly part to the project |
| 1                                     | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5  |
| ○                                     | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○  |

10. How much were the four core values of the YMCA respected in the project activities?

|                | 1<br>Not at all | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5<br>A great deal |
|----------------|-----------------|---|---|---|-------------------|
| Responsibility |                 |   |   |   |                   |
| Honesty        |                 |   |   |   |                   |
| Respect        |                 |   |   |   |                   |
| Care           |                 |   |   |   |                   |

11. How safe did you feel during the project events? Please tick one box.

|                            |   |   |   |   |                  |
|----------------------------|---|---|---|---|------------------|
| I did not feel safe at all |   |   |   |   | I felt very safe |
| 1                          | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |                  |

12. Please think about the participant from another National YMCA Movement with whom you have made most contact since the last RfR Project event you attended.

In which country does this person live (please tick one)?

|                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| Armenia                |  |
| Georgia                |  |
| Nagorno-Karabagh       |  |
| Russia                 |  |
| Norway                 |  |
| Poland                 |  |
| Switzerland            |  |
| Bangladesh             |  |
| Other (please specify) |  |

13. Please estimate how often you have made contact with that person during the last month.

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| 0-10 times         |  |
| 11-15 times        |  |
| More than 16 times |  |

14. In what ways do you keep in touch with that participant? Please tick any that apply.

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|   |  |
|---|--|
| SMS                                       |  |
| Phone                                     |  |
| Email                                     |  |
| Skype                                     |  |
| Internet (such as Facebook Odnaklassniki) |  |
| Other (please specify)                    |  |

15. Which of the following words/phrases do you think describe the RfR leadership in your national movement? Please underline SEVEN words only.

- |              |             |              |                 |
|--------------|-------------|--------------|-----------------|
| Motivating   | Fun         | Optimistic   | Problem-solving |
| Flexible     | Responsible | Organised    | Irresponsible   |
| Reliable     | Boring      | Enthusiastic | Indifferent     |
| Disorganised | Caring      | Respectful   | Involving       |
| Excluding    | Stressed    | Honest       | Pessimistic     |
| Trustworthy  | Reactive    | Chaotic      | Inflexible      |
| Calm         | Egoist      | Proactive    | Restricting     |

16. Concerning the project what would you like to see:

|                |  |
|----------------|--|
| More of ..     |  |
| The same of .. |  |
| Less of ..     |  |

17. What three words or phrases best describe your feelings about the RfR project?

|   |  |
|---|--|
| 1 |  |
| 2 |  |
| 3 |  |

18. Did you come across any of the following problems in the project activities? Please tick one box in each row.

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|  | 1. Not a problem | 2. Problem | 3. A very big problem | 4. Don't know |
|--|------------------|------------|-----------------------|---------------|
| Wasting money                            |                  |            |                       |               |
| Bad planning                             |                  |            |                       |               |
| Bad selection of participants            |                  |            |                       |               |
| People being excluded from activities    |                  |            |                       |               |
| Unresolved conflict between participants |                  |            |                       |               |
| Dealing with emergencies                 |                  |            |                       |               |

19. Please read the following statements and indicate your view in the appropriate column. If you would like to make any additional comments, please do so at the end of the questionnaire (noting the number of the statement).

|  | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree | Don't Know |
|--|-------------------|----------|-------|----------------|------------|
| The RfR project seriously promotes peace   |                   |          |       |                |            |
| I feel that girls and boys were treated equally in the project                     |                   |          |       |                |            |
| I became more tolerant as a result of being involved in the project                |                   |          |       |                |            |
| I gained very little from the project  |                   |          |       |                |            |
| The RfR project helped me become a stronger leader in my YMCA.                     |                   |          |       |                |            |
| My opinion was not taken into consideration during project events.                 |                   |          |       |                |            |
| I feel more Caucasian as a result of being involved in the project.                |                   |          |       |                |            |
| I am not clear what is the purpose of the RfR project.                             |                   |          |       |                |            |
| I like to tell my friends and family stories about the project and its activities. |                   |          |       |                |            |
| The activities provided did not corresponded to my interests.                      |                   |          |       |                |            |
| The activities in the project took into account my specific needs as a man/woman.  |                   |          |       |                |            |
| As a result of my experience I no longer want to be involved in the RfR project.   |                   |          |       |                |            |
| We acted as a team in response to emergencies during the project activities.       |                   |          |       |                |            |



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19. Please read the following statements and indicate your view in the appropriate column. If you would like to make any additional comments, please do so at the end of the questionnaire (noting the number of the statement).

|   | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree | Don't Know |
|---|-------------------|----------|-------|----------------|------------|
| I felt like an outsider during the project events.                        |                   |          |       |                |            |
| I am very interested to remain involved in the RfR project in the future. |                   |          |       |                |            |

20. Any other comments?

Thank you for taking the time to answer these questions. Your answers will be very helpful to us.

## **Appendix Eight: Summary Evaluation of ProFest, August 2009 held in Yerevan, Armenia**

### **1. GENERAL DATA**

#### **1.1. Venue**

Hotel Hrazdan - Yerevan, Armenia

#### **1.2. Time & Programme**

Pre-event programme - August 23 – 24: Visits to the YMCA Community Resource Centres Daranak and Aramian.

Main programme - August 24 – 30: See the working programme attached.

#### **1.3. Aim & Objectives**

The aim of the ProFest was to manifest integrity of creation, peace and justice.

The specific objectives of the ProFest were:

- to share with and learn from each other
- to build friendships and partnerships
- to jointly pursue the strengthening the YMCA

#### **1.4. Participants**

Including facilitators – 67, representing: Armenia (16), Belarus (2), Czech Republic (1), Georgia (13), Nagorno Karabagh (6), Poland (1), Russia (12), Switzerland (1), USA (14), UK (1). Average age: 26 – 27 years old, with youngest 12, oldest 56. Female - 29, Male – 38. 31 YMCA paid staff, 35 YMCA volunteers, and only one participant (actually facilitator) not involved in the YMCA at all.

#### **1.5. Facilitators**

Through applying the Home-Group instrument the event was facilitated by all the participants. Meanwhile the following (19) persons carried responsibilities for specific programme modules or components: Bruce Britton (Framework, UK): Michal Szymanczak, Vardan Hambardzumyan (YMCA Europe): Revaz Shavladze (YMCA Georgia): David Melkumyan (YMCA in Nagorno Karabagh): Antonio Merino, Anthony Hepp, Amanda Kelley, Cassidy Inamasu, Christopher Broadbent, Jason Vokral, Michael Moor, Nicole Cabelka, Russell Bone, Sarah Bone, Sina Szabados, Victoria Feola, Wesley Bender (YMCA of the USA).

#### **1.6. Evaluation Methods**

The information presented in this evaluation report is collected from the participants through:

- a) Evaluation games.
- b) Evaluation discussion in Home-groups.
- c) Plenary evaluation round by Home-group (8) and national delegation (5) representatives and facilitators.
- d) Evaluation forms, filled in by 57 participants.

- e) Video account and personal testimonials on the event.

The data presented in this summary is based on the information collated from the evaluation forms.

The video account and personal testimonials are being summed up by the YMCA of the USA representatives and will be shared with all the stakeholders of the Roots for Reconciliation programme as soon as ready.

## 2. QUESTIONNAIRE DATA

Within this tool the following scale was applied - excellent (5), good (4), fair (3), bad (2), very bad (1). Below are the summary results.

Overall the event was evaluated as **excellent – 4.7**.

### 2.1. General Questions

The average ranking for this cluster of questions is **excellent – 4.7**, including:

2.1.1. Practical Arrangements of the Seminar: **excellent – 4.8**.

2.1.2. Relevance of the Content of the Training: **excellent – 4.7**.

2.1.3. Facilitators: **excellent – 4.8**.

2.1.4. Group Dynamics / Social Time: **excellent – 4.8**.

2.1.6. Your Individual Participation Level: **good – 4.3**.

### 2.2. Questions on Specific Training Modules

The average ranking for this cluster of questions is **excellent – 4.7**, including:

2.2.1. Presentation of the Roots for Reconciliation programme and Do No Harm Methodology: **excellent – 4.7**.

2.2.2. Framework Sessions: **excellent – 4.8**.

2.2.3. Camp Planning Sessions: **excellent – 4.7**.

2.2.4. Presentation on Camping Programme visions: **excellent – 4.7**.

2.2.5. Camp Skill Workshops: **excellent – 4.8**.

2.2.6. Session on YMCA Online: **good – 4.2**.

2.2.7. Evening Programmes: **excellent – 4.7**.

2.2.7. Home-group tool: **excellent – 5.0**.

The scores in the above sets (2.1 and 2.2.) suggest that the ProFest was a well organized event where the participants felt and stated that the programme was very much relevant to their needs; that they enjoyed positive group dynamics and gained expected knowledge, skills and attitude. It is important to accent that the best ranked point in this part of the evaluation was the home-group tool applied during the event, which actually became the foundation for the success of the whole programme.

### 2.3. Questions on Relations

In the evaluation form the participants were asked to give the names of three participants (not from their own country) that they feel most likely to keep in contact with after the ProFest. Not surprisingly, all of the respondents identified people from other countries represented at the event as those that they would like to stay in touch with. For the Armenians the most popular group was the one from the USA (22 picks), then almost equally Russia (9) and Georgia (7). This shows a kind of desire in this national group for fresh faces and ideas. Yet the Georgian group preferred to stay loyal to the ongoing cross-border links with their Armenian peers (14), followed by the USA (9) and Russia (2). For

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the group from Russia, like the Armenians, the most popular group was again the one from the USA (17), than peers from Karabagh (10), followed by Armenia (6) and Georgia (3). Taking into consideration the fact that the group from Karabagh was a small one (only 6 representatives), it can be deducted that they made incredible impression on their Russian friends. The group from Karabagh mutually chose the Russian peers as those who they would like to stay in touch the most (9), followed by the USA (5), than equally Armenia and Georgia (2 each). And finally the group from the USA felt the most connected with the Armenian group (19), than almost equally with the Russian (6) and the Georgian ones (5).

Based on the data above, as well as my own observations, I would like to draw the following conclusions.

- 2.3.1. As a result of the ProFest there is a serious possibility of new partnership developments especially between the YMCAs of the USA and Armenia, Russia and Karabagh. These opportunities should be seriously considered by the leaderships of those Movements.
- 2.3.2. The Georgian-Armenian friendship remains the strong core of the regional cooperation, RfR especially considered. The leaderships of those Movements should continue efforts on best using this through further promoting and fostering local to local YMCA partnerships.
- 2.3.3. It is impotent to highlight that both the Russians and Georgians, even if in relatively fewer occasions, stated that they would like to stay in contact. This gives encouragement to the RfR management to plan further dialogue between them.
- 2.3.4. In general the group from the USA was the most popular (53 picks), displaying that they had valued and relevant input in the event facilitation, yet especially showing the need for their continued capacity building assistance to the YMCA Movement Strengthening process both in the South Caucasus as well as in Russia.
- 2.3.5. Strangely the YMCAs of Armenia and Karabagh are in a rather "cold" relations status, which should be definitely noted as a challenge to be met by the leaderships of those Movements, as well as by the RfR management.

**2.4. Statement / Mean Questions**

The table below summarizes the mean responses of the ProFest participants to a set of statements included in the event evaluation form.

Within this tool the following score system was applied – strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), agree (3), strongly agree (4), don't know (0). This means that the average score cannot be lower than 1 and higher than 4.

|  | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree | Don't Know |
|--|-------------------|----------|-------|----------------|------------|
| I have learned a lot about each country's culture, history and religion at ProFest.                          |                   |          | 3.29  |                |            |
| I have had a fun and enjoyed the company of the other participants.  |                   |          | 3.84  |                |            |
| I have built strong relationships, friendships and bonds with people from other countries as well as my own. |                   |          | 3.29  |                |            |
| I am leaving ProFest with many ideas to take back and put into practice at my own country/YMCA.              |                   |          | 3.63  |                |            |

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|  | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree | Don't Know |
|--|-------------------|----------|-------|----------------|------------|
| I am very optimistic that, as a result of ProFest, my YMCA will develop new international partnerships to expand YMCA programmes and activities. |                   |          | 3.00  |                |            |
| I have a clear understanding of what 'Roots for Reconciliation' is.  |                   |          | 3.38  |                |            |
| I have learned new skills that will be helpful for my local YMCA camps and community.  |                   |          | 3.48  |                |            |
| I am confident that I will <u>keep</u> connections (friendships) made during ProFest <u>after</u> I get back home.                               |                   |          | 3.24  |                |            |
| I am more confused now about the conflicts in the Region.  | 1.76              |          |       |                |            |
| I have a good understanding of what other countries are doing in their YMCAs (globally).   |                   |          | 3.42  |                |            |
| The Programme Festival has shown me how 'Do No Harm' principles work in practice.  |                   |          | 3.22  |                |            |
| I feel I have been able to share my ideas and experiences.   |                   |          | 3.33  |                |            |
| At times, I felt unsafe at ProFest.  | 1.19              |          |       |                |            |
| I have a deeper understanding of what 'reconciliation' means.  |                   |          | 3.32  |                |            |
| At times I felt that my opinions were not valued.  | 1.46              |          |       |                |            |

The data above shows that in all the aspects the ProFest met the expectations of its participants, meanwhile achieving its aim and objectives set. The participants expressed close to maximum contentment towards 4 of the statements, out of total 15. Namely:

- 2.4.1. They had fun and enjoyed the company of the other participants.
  - 2.4.2. They left ProFest with many ideas to take back and put into practice at their own country/YMCA.
  - 2.4.3. They learnt new skills that will be helpful for their local YMCA camps and community.
  - 2.4.4. They felt safe.
- To the rest of the statements the respondents in average gave only positive answers, from which I would like to pick up the following:
- 2.4.5. The ProFest was a proof of 'Do No Harm' principles working in practice.
  - 2.4.6. The participants, including those (USA, Russia) who were the first time involved in the RfR, got clear understanding what the programme is about.
  - 2.4.7. And that they gained more clear understanding what reconciliation means.

**2.5. Other Remarks**

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Many of the participants also shared free-style remarks in the end of the evaluation forms, and hereby I would like to quote one from each national delegation.

2.5.1. "Coming from Hawaii I've seen and lived with a lot of cultural differences, but I can't explain even how much I appreciate it. Short time it took for a 70+ people of 6+ countries to be and act as we all have this week. It inspired and motivated us to keep with the work we do and push for greater things. "

*(Caassidy Inamasy, 24 years-old, USA).*

2.5.2. "This is the greatest YMCA / life experience for me... the greatest team I ever worked with, taking into account the size and the diversity."

*(Tatsiana Volakhova, 30 year-old, Russia)*

2.5.3. "Experience met expectations! To meet again and again with more and more countries."

*(Roman Sagiyan, 22 years-old, Nagorno Karabagh)*

2.5.4. "I have very strong desire to stay in this project... I promise to be more active!"

*(Marita Bachiashvili, 20 years-old, Georgia)*

2.5.5. "I want to thank Vardan and wish him as well as all of us good luck in this work and mission. I wish this project expends its boards more and more and brings peace to the whole region and to all of us personally."

*(Haykuhi Karapetyan, 28 years-old, Armenia)*

### **Reported by**

**Vardan Hambardzumyan**

**YMCA Europe Regional Secretary**

**October 28, 2009**