



CENTER FOR PEACEBUILDING, ANNUAL PEACE CAMP

PROJECT HISTORY

The Center for Peacebuilding was officially founded in 2004 by peacebuilders Vahidin Omanovic and Mevludin Rahmanovic. CIM is located in Sanski Most – the former front lines of the conflict in Northwest Bosnia. Our mission is to rebuild trust and foster reconciliation among the people of Bosnia—Croats, Serbs, Bosniaks, and others—as well as support peace processes in other countries that have suffered from violent conflict.

One way we work to achieve our mission is through holding week-long Peace Camps each summer in Cazin – a serene town situated on the Una River in Northwestern Bosnia. In 2003, one year prior to our official founding, CIM collaborated with Swiss NGO Katharina Werk to conduct our inaugural Peace Camp, the first of many to come. Since then, Center for Peacebuilding has organized eight additional, week-long Peace Camps with twenty-five youth each year.

PROJECT SUMMARY

From 1992 – 1995 the dynamic of neighbor killing neighbor during the war in Bosnia resulted in a deeply divided and untrusting society. BiH is currently three separate nations split across ethnic lines located in one state – a failed state, where most issues of sovereignty fall into the hands of the High Commissioner. Since the conflict, Bosnian youth attend segregated schools with few opportunities to connect with different ethnicities and meet “the other(s)”. Due to this physical separation, negative stereotypes flow freely from one generation to the next, accentuated by rampant nationalist propaganda. This perpetuates fear in individuals and widens the ethnic divide on a societal level, creating a greater threat of renewed violence. This especially affects Bosnian youth who have no experience in a multi-ethnic society.

One key to decreasing the risk of future violence and increasing the potential for peace is to engage youth in the peace process by empowering them with the skills needed to become active peacebuilders. Youth are often negatively linked to conflict. If their grievances go ignored, they may address their needs by any means available to them. This may be through destructive methods such as partaking in terrorist activities or gangs. However, youth have the capacity to address their needs through positive means. Yet, youth in post-conflict societies are most noted for their capacity to engage in conflict, rather than their ability to prevent and resolve it. With nine years of experience of engaging youth in peacebuilding, we at CIM have seen tangible results of how youth can be a positive, dynamic force for peace. We thus believe that a large-scale effort to train, support, and engage youth in the peace process can aid in preventing future violence in BiH and fostering reconciliation across the ethnic divides.

CIM’s Peace Camp brings together approximately 25 Bosnian youth (aged 20 -30) to forge inter-ethnic relationships and gain skills in conflict resolution. This project empowers youth with the skills, resources, and support needed to engage in building peace at the grassroots

level – starting in their own communities. First, Peace Camp brings together youth equally representing Bosnia and Herzegovina’s (BiH) different ethnic and religious groups to a safe space. Over the course of the week, participants experience personal growth and transformation through workshops, trainings, and forging relationships across BiH’s ethnic/religious divides (see schedule below).

During Peace Camp, professional peacebuilders and trainers teach the participants skills in conflict resolution and peacebuilding, such as nonviolent communication, dialogue, and intergroup understanding. Upon completion of Peace Camp, the youth work together and individually to implement peace activities/trainings and become changemakers in their home communities. Lastly, through our annual Peace Camp, we seek to establish a network of young, trained, and motivated peacebuilders who will continue to work towards peace for years to come. We aim to do this through establishing physical and emotional support for participants in their communities and through a wider support network of young peacebuilders across BiH. This network is also available to our participants via virtual means in which they can gain support not just through communication via email, but also via our online forums, and social media sites.

PEACE CAMP OUTCOMES AND RESULTS

The results of Peace Camp are both wide and deep. Multi-ethnic relationships built between participants during Peace Camp help to break down stereotypes, debunk prejudices, and span the societal divide seen between Bosniaks, Serbs, and Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina today. Peace Camp also addresses past traumas and helps participants to heal and move forward, enabling them to help others to do the same. Perhaps most critically, Peace Camp empowers youth to take lessons learned back to their own communities. They stand as positive examples of multi-ethnic coexistence and reconciliation in their community. What’s more, Peace Camp trains youth to design and conduct their own nonviolent communication and conflict resolution workshops. With CIM’s support, each Peace Camp participant is required to facilitate twenty conflict resolution workshops in local schools. As CIM fosters each participant to be a seed of peace in their home communities, our mission is introduced to a wide and diverse group of Bosnian and Herzegovinian citizens.

In terms of numbers, over 180 youth have participated in Peace Camp over the last nine years. Peace Camp participants conduct 20 conflict resolution workshops in their home community. Since 2003, CIM has empowered young people to conduct 3960 peace education workshops. The individual lives transformed through CIM’s peace camp are equally incredible.

REFLECTIONS FROM PAST PARTICIPANTS

Many past participants have noted that the Peace Camp is a “great, positive experience” or even “the best experience of my life.” Here are some quotes from participants about what they learned and took away from their Peace Camp experiences.

What did I learn at Peace Camp?

- Stereotypes are deeply rooted and the ideas of peace/coexistence and accepting the other side still need to be worked on for many years.

·I learned that people, however much they say that they don't have prejudice, that they lie, lie, lie to themselves.

·That the idea of community/coexistence can be implemented with good will and effort if it is authentically desired – that stereotypes are deeply rooted – that the ideas of peace/coexistence and accepting the other side still need to be worked on for many years.

·The importance of caring for one another. The difficulties that our personal and communal histories present for connecting with others and building peace.

·I learned that regardless of which ethnic group we belong in substance, that we all have similar problems. Standing in the shoes of others I better understood the ethnic group that I don't belong to.

·[I learned] to share feelings that I was sure I would never be able to share completely with people from my and other ethnic groups.

·I learned techniques for leading nonviolent communication workshops. In addition, the beauty of diversity and coexistence, diverse perceptions and reacting to them through active listening and conflict resolution.

What will I change in my everyday life based on the lessons of Peace Camp?

·I will go home with an increased desire to care for those around me. I will also be more sensitive to the persona stories/histories of the people I interact with day to day.

·Peace Camp has helped me to deeply understand the underlying needs, wants and fears of parties/individual conflicts – these different factors contribute to conflict without immediately being apparent. I will take time in my daily life to consider what is really “underneath” the surface of those I come into conflict with.

·I think that I will continue to behave as a peacebuilder and that this experience helped me strengthen my position as a peacebuilder.

·To improve my view of other people; every generalization is a lie. Now I am convinced to change that “They are” into “some are ... the majority are” or something similar. To change that “We are” into “I am ... I believe ...”

I will change my views about people who are different than me

·[Peace Camp] really helped me free myself from various forms of prejudice and fear . . . I return to my town as a completely new person who is full of love, which I will of course share with other people regardless of their nationalities.

PEACE CAMP SCHEDULE 2012
(Tentative)

SUNDAY

TIME		Activity
FROM	TO	
16:00		Arrival
18:00	19:30	Dinner
19:30	21:00	Introduction meeting: History & Vision of the Center for Peacebuilding

MONDAY

TIME		Activity
FROM	TO	
07:30	08:00	Morning prayer (Catholic)
08:00	09:00	Breakfast
09:00	10:30	Non violent communication
11:00	12:30	Work in groups
12:30	17:00	Lunch/ Break - contacts between NGO (plakati)
17:00	18:00	Dance
18:00	19:30	Dinner
19:30	21:00	Dialogue: Theories and Practice

TUESDAY

TIME		Activity
FROM	TO	
07:30	08:00	Morning prayer (Muslim)
08:00	09:00	Breakfast
09:00	10:30	Causes of conflict
11:00	12:30	Work in groups
12:30	17:00	Lunch/Break
17:00	18:00	Dance
18:00	19:30	Dinner
19:30	21:00	Dialogue in community - session

WEDNESDAY

TIME		Activity
FROM	TO	
07:30	08:00	Morning prayer (Orthodox Christian)
08:00	09:00	Breakfast
09:00	10:30	Stereotypes and prejudices
11:00	12:30	Work in groups
12:30	17:00	Lunch/Break
17:00	18:00	Dance
18:00	19:30	Dinner
19:30	21:30	Intro to Monitoring and Evaluation

THURSDAY

TIME		Activity
FROM	TO	
07:30	08:00	Morning prayer (open)
08:00	09:00	Breakfast
09:00	10:30	Cycle of revenge and reconciliation
11:00	12:30	Work with groups
12:30	17:00	Lunch and pause
17:00	18:00	Dance
18:00	19:30	Dinner
19:30	21:00	Dialogue in community - session

FRIDAY

TIME		Activity
FROM	TO	
07:30	08:00	Interreligious ceremony
08:00	09:00	Breakfast
09:00	10:30	Personal Commitments, concret Project in the local communities
11:00	12:30	Work in groups
12:30	13:30	Launch and pause
13:30	18:00	Monitoring and evaluation training
18:00	19:30	Dinner
19:30	21:00	Celebration of differencies

SATURDAY

TIME		Activity
FROM	TO	
08:00	09:00	Breakfast
09:00	11:00	Evaluation