

"Negotiating our future"

A joint project of the SFP and The Center for Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation (CCRR)

The direct participants included 30 Israelis (17 men and 13 women) and 30 Palestinians (15 women and 15 men). The activities took place in the Palestinian Territories, in Israel, Turkey and Jordan.

This project started in January 2007 and ended in September 2009. We had a team of researchers, and together with the project coordinators from both the Israelis and the Palestinian side the project was monitored.

After a preparation phase, the first step was a uni-national consultation: the Israeli and the Palestinian delegation met separately for a 2 day session to suggest topics for negotiations, determine tactics, and choose 6 representatives for management team. The SFP conducted the meeting of the Israeli delegation at Neve Shalom/Wahat al Salam on 8-9 of June 2007. The meeting of the Palestinian delegation was conducted by CCRR and took place in Bethlehem on June 14 and on August 18, 2007. Also the CCRR's and SFP's staff met once in order to exchange what happened in the respective uni-national meetings.

From August 9 – 12, 2007, the 6 Israeli and the 6 Palestinian delegates met in Beit Jallah to decide on the topics for the negotiations. The two project directors of the SFP and the CCRR introduced the organizations, the project and the staff, and at that point the responsibility for managing the meeting was passed to the two heads of delegations. At the end of long discussion, the following topics were selected in a democratic process: Jerusalem, Refugees, Borders and Sovereignty, Natural Resources and Security. In the remaining time the representatives paired according to topic and planned the way they will work together in the joint negotiations meeting. The head of the Jerusalem committee from the Israeli delegation sat with the Palestinian head of the Jerusalem committee, and so on.

The first round of negotiations took place in Antalya, Turkey, from November 1 to 4, 2007. The negotiations took place everyday, as planned, and in five committees. In addition to the meetings in committees, the delegations held national discussions.

On the last day they all tried to agree on something written in order to summarize what they had discussed, but this turned out to be impossible, as negotiating orally had been completely different than agreeing on written statements or even recommendations: they all had to realize that it was way too soon to agree on something specific.

Between November and January, the research team worked on the materials: there were about 75 hours of transcripts to summarize and analyse. The SFP's and CCRR's staff met twice in Bethlehem, in order to focus on summarising the meeting in Turkey and on how to continue from there.

In January 2008 the CCRR staff met with the 6 members of the delegation's management team. The aim of this meeting was to better understand the first round of negotiations, and especially from the point of view of the functions of the elected chairpersons. A similar meeting took place in January at the SFP. The staff met with their 6 chairpersons to assess the first round of negotiations.

An uni national consultation for each delegation took place in march. The Palestinian delegation met in Bethlehem to discuss the report about the first round of negotiations completed by the research team, while the Israeli delegation met at Wahat al Salam/ Neve Shalom. Their program was divided into two parts. On the first day the delegation

summarized the first negotiations event in Turkey and voted on changes in the way they will work in the future. And on the second day the committees sat to prepared for the second round of negotiations which took place in Amman, Jordan on April 10-14, 2008.

After that the delegations met for the second uni national consultations in Wahat al Salam/Neve Shalom and Betlehem in July and prepared the third round of negotiations, which took place in Antalya, Turkey on November 13-17, 2008.

We gave the participants an opportunity to experience the dynamics of negotiations. This objective was reached in a hands-on methodology. We did not teach skills of negotiations, and we did not offer training in different tactics. The participants used their experiences, and learned as they went along, what worked better. What we added as staff was the over all picture concerning the differences between Israelis and Palestinians in negotiating. The second specific objective was to gain insight into the obstacles of negotiations and create tools that can help overcome them: throughout the process the participants created ad-hoc tools to overcome obstacles

The third objective was to publicize a document summarizing the experiences, thoughts, analysis and recommendations. This was done, as planned in three languages. We realized as the project developed that we were creating two new things, the first was the obvious experience of third- track negotiations, with all the vast experience and knowledge that was created. The second was a new methodology. We created a method for encounters between Palestinians and Israelis that is new. It is more political and less psychological, and it caters to the aspirations of the Palestinians at this stage. In the document that we published we shared our thoughts on both.