

A Bosnian Example

A friend of mine of Serbian background, who has taught in Sarajevo for many years, was reading a traditional story to her class of 10-year-olds when one of them spoke up 'That's a Croatian story. I don't want to hear that!' She was startled, thinking it was some sort of aberration, and even amusing. But when she told her colleagues about it, she was jolted to find that they saw nothing strange in it, and certainly nothing funny. She felt something very important had been lost.

Peggy Barry: Evidence to the Tribunal

source of information about how INGOs are viewed by independent professionals within Bosnia. She reported their opinion that:

- There is considerable geographical disparity in the delivery of humanitarian aid, which can result in waste;
- INGOs tend to stick to a single source of information or local broker;
- Staff recruitment policies are not sufficiently rigorous; and,
- International staff prefer to live in cities, especially Sarajevo, which contributes to geographical disparities in aid provision.

With respect to implementation of the CRC, Ms. Barry stated that the two organisations most involved are the Office of the Ombud and the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights. Both of these organisations report that the most serious violations of children's rights are related to education. These include violence and deliberate provocation by teachers based on ethnic divisions. But the most serious problem is that thousands of children are not enrolled in

VIOLATIONS OF CHILDREN'S RIGHTS IN KOSOVA – THE PRISHTINA POST-PESSIMISTS

In September 1989, as part of the policy to 'Serbianise' education in Kosova, Serbian police barred Kosovar Albanian children and youth at gunpoint from entering state schools and universities. Months later primary schools were segregated, with walls or grilles dividing the area for Serb pupils, including laboratories and equipment, from the much larger numbers of ethnic Albanians, for whom overcrowding meant schooling in up to four shifts, sometimes even at night. Secondary schools were closed to Kosovar Albanian children, for whom lessons were arranged in houses, garages and basements often without the most basic equipment. The publishing houses for schoolbooks in their language were closed down and pupils had to depend entirely on notes taken during lessons.

Kosovar Albanians set up their own, unofficial schools financed largely by the Albanian diaspora. But this apartheid-style education meant that, for the majority of Kosovar Albanians, lessons were driven underground for almost a decade and led to hatred between children of different ethnic backgrounds. During periods of armed conflict school buildings were occupied by Serb forces and NATO bombings led to schools being burned. UNICEF estimates that 45% of schools in Kosova were either totally destroyed or seriously damaged during the war.

school, particularly the most socially and physically disadvantaged. Curricula are politicised and school fees are charged, but it is difficult for civil society to intervene.

? Questions to Peggy Barry

The Tribunal asked Ms. Barry about the role of NGOs in Bosnia with respect to unaccompanied children and children in prisons. She replied that there are many NGOs in this field, with different aims and uncoordinated programmes. It is not usually possible to know which organisation is carrying out what activities, and in many cases the NGOs are simply responsive rather than having any worked out philosophy or strategy. Programmes for orphans vary according to the ethos and background of the organisation and what happens to orphans often depends on where they are found. Orphans find it difficult to recover property to which they are entitled by inheritance: 'Ownership is a nightmare, not just because of the conflict but also because of the history of collective ownership. Nobody knows who anything belongs to.'

Ms. Barry's responses to questions from other witnesses also described the lack of co-ordination mechanisms and the failure of government to control the activities of NGOs because of lack of power, resources and planning.

Interventions from participants also touched on the issue of the appropriateness of some of the interventions used, particularly with respect to psychological trauma. It was suggested that models developed from non-conflict trauma situation should not be applied to war-affected children, and that Western models of counselling are not suitable for use in cultures that interpret trauma differently and use models of healing rather than cure. Ms. Barry agreed that counselling needs to be non-threatening and culturally appropriate.

SUMMARY LUNCHTIME PRESENTATION

Post-Pessimists groups are associations of children and youth that aim to build bridges of understanding and friendship between young people of different backgrounds. Post-Pessimism has developed into the only multi-ethnic youth movement with autonomous groups in several Balkan countries. The name implies a rejection of pessimism, but a cautious approach to optimism in which the guiding principle is 'If we cannot be friends, we must try at least not to be enemies.' The movement enables children and young people to meet each other across ethnic boundaries through camps, art clubs, journalism and sociology groups. In addition to international meetings and publications the Prishtina Post-Pessimists have organised campaigns, lobbied politicians and participated in efforts to rebuild and reorganise the country in the post-conflict period, accomplishing the greatest number of projects among the groups in the movement. Membership includes both Serbs and Albanians. The achievements of this group have led to receipt of the Global Peace and Tolerance Award for Social Activism at the UN New York headquarters on 16th November 1999.

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