2. Constructive Conflict Transformation Training

2.1 Why training?

Both in Palestine and elsewhere "training" has become a very fashionable term and practice in recent years. Countless training courses have taken place in many fields including social, technical and scientific. The term "training" is applied to all kinds of knowledge transfers on any subject, and almost "everyone" has taken at least one: the miracle tool to build capacities and work for a change. Sometimes the actual learning effect as much the sustainability remains questionable. Why then choose training as a method to learn about conflict transformation?

The decision in favor of "training" is based on a certain idea and understanding. In the context of this manual, it certainly entails more than simply giving lectures about conflict transformation and nonviolence. "Training" encompasses significant parts of practical exercises and integrates the pre-existing knowledge and experience that the participant already has. Such a training style makes the theory perceptible to the trainees. Further, a very practical approach allows one to immediately implement principles of constructive conflict transformation: if a conflict occurs during the training, the idea is to address it in a constructive way. The desired change should not only be discussed in the workshop, but also carried out as the opportunity to make a change in the *here and now*. That also means that the trainer needs to engage him/herself in living and illustrating what s/he is talking about; both during the training and outside of it. Training therefore serves not only as a theoretical teaching method but as a platform for what is taught to be implemented in a real-life yet controlled environment. Working in such a way that incorporates the various techniques will maximize the learning capacity of the trainees. The risk of the participants walking out in the end without taking anything along can be minimized.

Another point that should be added is that training very often tends to be just an "event". Thereafter, nothing follows. It is encouraged that the *here and now* of training also becomes a *there and then*: training in constructive conflict transformation should become a program: after a basic training, workshops should continue regularly and the principles of constructive conflict transformation need to be incorporated into daily life at school.

2.2 The Concept: Constructive Conflict Transformation and Nonviolence Training

How now is it possible to implement the theory outlined in the previous chapter? The activities in the following chapter of this manual will help to address this question. Yet, it is crucial to consider the arrangement of the activities. A random mix will not achieve the intended results. It is important to understand, select and arrange all these activities as part of a concept, one that reflects the basic idea of constructive conflict transformation. Once again: The issue of violence in schools should not only be addressed in reaction to the events themselves when they occur. There is a need to work on a long term scale towards prevention:

The focus is to develop the relationships in the school environment and streamline the behavior of the students. Building and enhancing their social competences should help them to resort less and less to violence when confronted by conflict or difficult situations. They will learn how to solve their conflicts themselves rather than having counselors and teachers impose solutions on them.

In order to proceed this way, the following training concept is suggested with the four key competences. All the activities within this manual facilitate working on these competences[1]:

Affirmation: Two key issues are addressed here: self awareness and self confidence. It is based on the presupposition that destructive behavior, aggression and violence originate in part in little self awareness, fear and lack of acknowledgement (recognition for one's achievements from colleagues and mentors). Working on self awareness and building a positive image of oneself help to lead a way out of the destructive circle. Additionally, only someone who is aware of his/her personality can recognize which of his/her needs are being threatened or denied when in a conflict. Central questions that should be asked are "Who am I?", "What are my weaknesses and my strengths?" "Where do I come from?", "Where do I intend to go?" It helps children to develop themselves at school and elsewhere if they experience acknowledgement of themselves beyond their academic performance. Further, self awareness is an issue of the collectivity as well: "Who am I in the group?", "What kind of identity does the group hold that I am part of?", "How do I interact with the group?" etc..

Communication: Insufficient, lack of or miscommunication between people often leads to anger and conflicts. Working on communication competence is therefore crucial as part of constructive conflict transformation. It is necessary to be able to communicate about oneself and each other's thoughts, feelings, needs, wishes; the issues that are part of the affirmation competence. The communication needs to take place in a way that precludes judgment or attack. A good communication competence also includes being able to listen to the other, understand him/her and acknowledge the fact that s/he might have another 'truth'. Good communication clarifies the relationship between two people. If the relationship is very clear it will be much easier to deal with actual problem.

Conflict Understanding: Chapter one has already shown that conflicts and violence are complex. In order to deal with conflict in a constructive way it is important to have a clear understanding of it. The models discussed earlier that diagnose and explain conflicts facilitate the understanding of the various factors around conflict and violence such as the dynamics, the actors involved, the background, the context etc. This also includes the perception of conflict as an opportunity rather than simply a risk and danger. On this basis it is possible to choose the appropriate way of resolving the conflict.

The Conflict Transformation Circle

Communication → Conflict Understanding → Cooperation → Affirmation → Communication

Constructive Conflict Transformation

Cooperation: Solving conflicts constructively calls for cooperation between the opposing sides. This requires a number of the competences mentioned above to be put into practice: i.e., accept, tolerate and respect each other and being ready to support each other. Cooperation also entails the interest in a common goal: the belief in the possibility of finding a win-win solution. It should be emphasized that differences do not necessarily sabotage cooperation but rather can be an opportunity for efficient cooperation.
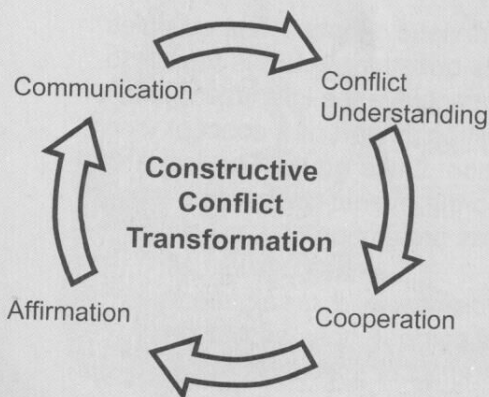
The blocks of competences in method and content build on each other. A strong self awareness is crucial in order to be able to go to the following units. It is impossible to constructively deal with others in conflict if one does not know oneself. Communication helps to provide information about oneself to others as well as share ideas. Conflict Understanding leads to Cooperation. All competences are crucial to be able to deal with conflicts in a constructive way: the "building blocks" of affirmation, communication, conflict understanding and cooperation make up "the house" of conflict transformation. Yet, the house will never be finished: working with constructive conflict transformation asks for continuous learning. Cooperation again leads up to the initial building block of affirmation: I learn about myself, once I cooperate with the others. In this way, a circle can represent this learning process. The training should never stop. Practically speaking this refers to what was mentioned above: don't limit training to a certain number of hours or days. It is strongly advisable that – after an initial workshop which covers the basics – shorter sessions with fewer hours follow. Moreover, the idea of constructive conflict transformation should be implemented in daily school life and – ideally, in the long run – into the teaching curriculum.

The Conflict Puzzle

Affirmation Cooperation

Constructive Conflict Transformation

Communication Conflict Understanding
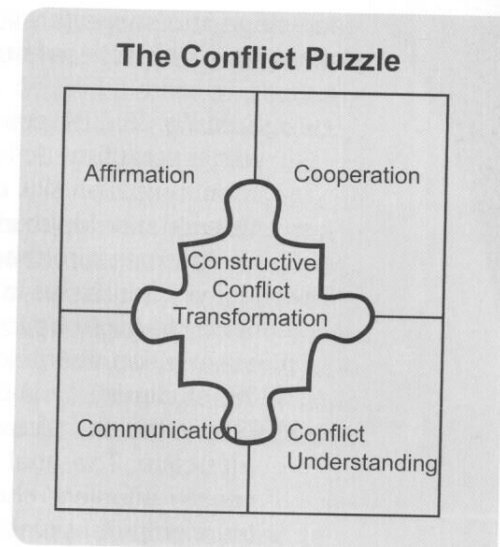
Another aspect needs to be mentioned about this cycle. Strictly speaking, the learning does not only describe a circle: Dealing with one aspect, in many cases also means also to include parts of another. Thus the building blocks cannot be strictly separated from each other. This will be seen with the various activities: in many case it is impossible to choose an activity that for example only deals with communication. Thus, each building block interlocks with the other like pieces of a puzzle: once self awareness is improved it will be easier to communicate and interact with the others. Through interaction with the others one will learn more about oneself.

2.3 Key issues of training[2]

Training requires careful planning. It needs to be customized to the target group and the activities are to be in accordance with the overall context and the actual aim of the workshop. A careful design of a seminar is also part of its effectiveness. The following aspects should be considered. Certainly, discussion of these points with colleagues, teachers or counselors – even from other schools – and the directorate will be helpful in achieving good results.

2.3.1 AIM: How to define the aim?

The aim of training seems to be very clear: to lower the level of violence in schools. Yet, giving it some more thought, it quickly becomes clear that this aim is too vast, abstract and most of all too ambitious to be achieved within just one training course. Therefore, it is advisable to differentiate between *aim*, which addresses the wider goal and *objective* which is narrower, and more realistic to be achieved through particular actions. Thus the training should be designed in a way that follows an objective rather than an aim. Although it has already been insisted that working with conflict transformation is a life long process, it still is advisable to divide

each stage into subparts with objectives in order not to get lost. A common and helpful tool in defining one's objectives is called "smart". SMART stands for:

- *Specific:* The objective needs to be described very specifically. For example: "Work with interactive activities in a three day workshop (four hours each day) on the communication skill of 10 students."
- *Measurable:* Measuring the results of social development remains difficult. Of course on can measure the completion of the above mentioned workshop. However, this is just a quantitative measure and nothing that tells us really about the development students might have gone through. Measuring social development needs scrutinizing observation over a longer time period. Relevant questions can be: What happened to the students? How do they communicate now: on a daily basis and when in a fight? This in the end allows qualitative statements that are useful.
- *Attractive:* The goal should be attractive for the target group as well as for the other people affected: choose activities that are enjoyable for the students and that the teachers will appreciate an outcome such as an enhanced class atmosphere through the training which will also benefit the teaching task.
- *Realistic:* It will be very hard to work on an improvement of conflict transformation skills of the whole school. Starting out with a small group is much more realistic.
- *Timely:* A clear timeframe needs to be set. Otherwise the objective risks getting lost.

In order to closely follow-up with the objective a so called action plan table can also help:

Action Plan Table

Objective	Activities	Progress indicators	Inhibiting factors
The objective according to SMART	What activities are conducted to achieve the objective?: • a workshop with students • discussion with colleagues • change in the daily school life	What are the indicators that mark development on the way to achieve the goal (such as "students can express themselves better", "they have a higher awareness of what conflict is about")	Are there any conditions, circumstances that might influence the project in a negative way and prevent one from achieving the goal? Knowing about the potential difficulties in advance might help to overcome them.

2.3.2 *FRAME: What is the context?*

To define the specific objective of a training course it helps to have closely studied the overall context which also sets certain limits. There are a lot of outside influential factors that contribute to the situations at schools: the socio-economic structure of society, the political situation, the background of each student at home etc. Things happening outside the school will be difficult to have an impact on. Additionally, inside of the school there are limits to be considered. Going from the wider to the narrower context: The political situation in Palestine tends to play a very important role in this discussion. Certainly, it has a significant influence on the situation in schools. There is – from the lever this manual suggests – little opportunity to effect a change in this aspect and it is also not the aim. It is much more important to be aware of this influence

rather than giving in to or being frustrated by it. Youth is one of the groups in society that suffer most from this conflict. One very immediate reaction of children is stress and violence. In training there is an opportunity to address certain aspects of this by giving room to discuss violent experiences or work with activities for distress and discuss ways of dealing with conflict situations.[3]

Another influencing factor is the Palestinian society. What is the culture like around conflict and violence? How is conflict and violence dealt with? Is there a discourse around it? If so, what is the discourse like? Other relevant questions are the relationship between men and women and adults and youth. It helps to understand the nature of conflicts and violence more if it is clear how the different groups relate to each other. For the purpose of training that means that a trainer needs to consider what might be the impact on the trainees s/he is working with. What are the relevant question for them in this society and how can it be addressed in a workshop in order to work on their social competences?

Awareness of the youths' family situation is an important factor. Similar questions need to be asked about the society. Usually, the economic situation plays a role as well: families that struggle to survive put most of their resources to this end and thus have less time to take care of their children's educational and emotional needs. In severe cases the children will be asked to contribute by working in the streets. Having a basic knowledge about all of this helps the trainer to understand why a child behaves in a certain way. It is very important to take this knowledge into consideration when choosing activities.

Finally, the immediate context and dynamic at school should be taken into consideration. Once again the relevant questions are similar to the ones of the whole society and the families. Yet, there is also a more practical aspect to it as it concerns the immediate implementation of the training. What is the atmosphere in the school like? Is there already a culture of dealing with conflicts constructively? How do the students deal with each other, how does the staff deal with the students, how does the staff deal with each other? Will colleagues be open to support such a training course or will it be instrumental to convince them?
Summing up, the context is relevant on two levels.
On a very practical one: What needs to be considered when implementing workshop? Is there a room to give training, is there enough time? What kind of support do the trainers require etc.?

The other level refers to the content of the workshop: The whole training needs to be closely connected to the environment the trainees come from and live in. What are their relevant questions around conflict transformation and how can a trainer customize the activities to suit this. The participants need to be picked up at the point where they stand and the content of the training must "talk" to them. Under any other circumstance, the workshop will most likely fail.

2.3.3 TRAINEES: Who is the target group?

Closely connected to the question of the framework is to consider the characteristics of the target group. What is their *age* and what is their *educational background*? Accordingly, the content and the style of the training need to be adapted. Are the activities appropriate for their age? Maybe some activities or models are too complex to be understood by the younger

students. Possibly more time for discussion or explanation is sufficient to adapt activities around complicated models. In other cases the exercise needs to be changed. The appropriate language should be chosen.

Most schools in Palestine segregate boys and girls and only some have started to accept co-ed classes. Yet, the *gender aspect* in the group will still play a role. The youth meets outside of school, in the street, at home etc. and of course they have questions about the interaction of men and women. One's sexuality and the way we choose to deal with it – the gender aspect – is part of one's personality and it influences behavior in conflict. This is part of the daily reality and should be made part of the educational process in the workshop. The best way to explore this is of course to work with mixed groups. Otherwise it is a laboratory situation that will not achieve the desired results. Not having experienced the social interaction of males and females practically and trying to find constructive ways of dealing with it, will risk to be a source of future conflicts.

In schools it is very likely that the students are obliged to participate in a workshop. As regards the *motivation,* it might mean that it is rather low: "another boring teaching unit". The trainer must be aware of this and be prepared to face it. Yet, the initial student resistance should easily be overcome. Workshops with constructive conflict transformation first of all have a lot of potential in order not to make it just "another boring teaching unit": a non-teacher centered-learning integrating a lot of activities is rather unusual in the daily school life. Further, a way of working on the motivation is to find out about the *needs* of the students: "What is it that is getting on their nerves most in the daily school life?" Such questions are likely to be answered with "Being on bad terms with a friend or fellow class members". From this point it is possible to start working on behavior and relationships and once issues that students are interested in are addressed the motivation will increase.

Needs are usually not articulated in a very concrete way. For example, when working with teachers, they will ask for tools to make the class quiet and to lower the violence. Students often put it in an even more indirect way: "Getting on each other's nerves should stop." The trainees find it difficult to exactly articulate their needs. Speaking in the case of the teachers as trainees, there is a need for them to understand that there is more to it than just tools in order to change the situation in class rooms. As regards the students, they should understand that getting on each other's nerves has partly to do with their interaction. In many cases, it is initially hard to understand why there is a need to work on oneself before moving on. Therefore, the trainer should have a very sensitive and empathetic skill in order to understand the indirect request and uncover the hidden needs.

Previous experience and knowledge is very relevant to all participants. Even the youngest student has been in a conflict and learned a lesson from it. It is important to consider and integrate this into the training throughout the activities. This is also a way of acknowledgement for the students, which empowers and helps them to develop their personality. Working with adults this rule applies as well: many times the experiences of older colleagues is a valuable source of learning. Usually, with adults there is also more knowledge through university studies or similar trainings elsewhere.

Finally, the question should be asked *how well the group members already know each other*. Getting to know each other and group building is not only important for an effective work

atmosphere; it is also part of the concept. One should be aware of the fact that students who are together in one class already for a long time do not necessarily really know each other or function well as a group. Certainly, working on group building addresses a lot of important issues of the concept: learning about relationships, how one interacts with others, cooperation etc.

2.3.4   STYLE: What is the training style?

The basic principle is that the training needs to include both theory and practical activities in order to be absorbed. People and especially children often find it difficult to pay attention to lectures longer than thirty minutes. It is advisable to limit lectures or presentations to just 10 to 15 minutes. After that there is a sharp decline in the capacity to take in lectured information. Practical examples, activities, encouragement for discussion and reflection will help to make topics more easily understandable and maximize the learning effect. Practical parts open the opportunity for the participants to bring in their own knowledge. Information should never just been presented by the trainer but worked out with the students. The style is thus dynamic and interactive: swapping between theoretical and practical parts as well as taking into account the experience of the trainees.

Another reason for this style is the *"here and now"*: it is not only to talk about the theory of conflict transformation in a training course, but its immediate application. This approach can start from the very beginning of the training. Searching and agreeing on rules and regulations for the whole length of the workshop integrates the participants and has them assume responsibility. In a training course it is for example also possible to work in a very different atmosphere from the one at schools: a space of acknowledgement and appreciation, free of crediting and learning pressure. Lack of appreciation, acknowledgement, severe educational pressure and failure in educational performance are all contributing factors to student violence.

Finally, the style of the training should allow a certain kind of space for the participants to experience and relate to each other through the activities. Sometimes it might be difficult for a person to join an activity because of a certain individual experience or his/her attitude. One should not be forced into activities as this might be counterproductive. If at any time this person feels able to join, the space should be granted to allow him/her to do so.

2.3.5   TECHNIQUES: How to design and implement a training course?
2.3.5.1 The Design

The main elements of training are short lectures, practical activities as well as group and individual discussion and reflection. The lectures include the presentation of theory and general explanations about the conduct of activities. Activities comprise the practical aspect of the training content. This approach follows the fact that the learning effect will be limited if someone simply passively receives information, rather than if this information is thoroughly explained by someone and then put into practice and experienced first hand. Hearing and understanding – gaining knowledge – is also not enough. The trainees should also develop a consciousness that will alter their behavior. Only this way will a change be achieved.

One way to manage this mix of theory and practice is to first provide theoretical input and then

have the participants experience, apply and live the theory through practical activities. The other way is to have the trainees' first experience something and only after give the theoretical explanation. It depends on the target group and the context as to which way applies better. A theoretical introduction to the conflict transformation method mediation followed by a practical exercise seems reasonable. In other cases an initial practical experience has a larger impact: Theoretical explanations about enhanced communication tools are much better understood, if the challenges of communication are first experienced. Experience has proven that the learning capacity of youth is much better when applying the latter method.

It is important to give the elaboration of the schedule and the appropriate arrangements of activities sufficient time. Especially, if one is a beginner in training, the conduct of a workshop should be carefully planned. Similar to the need to be very clear about the overall aim of the training, each subpart needs to target a certain 'sub goal' and each activity should be in accordance with the topic of the subpart. For example: say the subpart is about communication, and aimed at working on the verbal interaction of students (sub goal). The activity needs to correspond with this sub goal. Also, the activities are to be selected or adapted in such a way that the environment which the participants come from is taken into consideration. They should allow the trainees to discuss topics that are relevant and important to them. For the students that could mean to make one's observation of how they deal with each other part of the introduction of an activity, discuss it and then apply relevant activities that allow them to work on this. The following schema can be a helpful tool for this purpose:

Table for Training Schedule

[Goal of the subpart, i.e. communication skills]

Duration of activity	Name of activity	Implementation process	Goal (of the activity)	Materials used
8:00 to 8:30	Welcome Warm up	Opening round Conduct warm up activity	Open up training session, discuss issues from last training Get into the training session	"Shams"
8:30 to 9:30	Mouse Face	Two groups: each group is shown a picture. Couples are made with one member of each group Couples get to see the third picture and have to commonly draw what they have seen without communicating	Understand different underlying concepts relevant to communication	Three pictures: mouse, face and mouseface A4 papers, crayons
Break				
[…] (Continuation of plan)				

The schema includes a column to schedule the time. It is important to be clear about the duration of an activity beforehand. Another column is added for the name of the activity. Keywords are used to describe how the activity is conducted (not a detailed description but a brief abstract as a reminder). The next column is attributed to the goal: usually the definition of the goal helps to make sure that the selected activity suits it. Finally, the last column gives space to note the materials needed. Sample schedules are presented in the appendix of the manual. A training unit should not take more than one and a half hours. After this a break of 15 minutes is necessary. After the next one and a half hour session a longer break is required. Very difficult topics should be alternated with lighter sessions.

The design of a training course depends on the circumstances at the school. Usually there is not enough time available to do long sessions of a couple hours or even half a day. Sessions that are too long might even exceed the capacity of students to concentrate. A trainer needs to be flexible but should make sure that the training session will take place regularly over a couple weeks or months and at least once a week. The ideal arrangement for a workshop is over a couple of consecutive days. This is more effective than just one day every week. Yet, an alternative can be to start once with a few days to build a basis and then work regularly for a day or even just a few hours on a sequence of days throughout a number of weeks. Flexibility also goes for within the training: When sensing tension among the participants, due to a stressful or difficult activity or for other reasons, s/he needs to adapt to this (break,

discussion, activities to lower the stress level etc.).

Other issues that need to be considered when planning for a training course are the following:

Group size: the group of trainees should ideally not exceed 10 to 16 students, especially if the trainer is alone with the group. Any other larger group will severely limit the possibility to work with the trainees effectively. Reality unfortunately is often different. More than 30 students per class is no exception in Palestine and counselors often have to take care of all the students from two schools. Once again, dealing with this tough reality in the best way possible may allow finding ways that function: Even, if it does not include all students, it could be possible to start with a small group (SMART!). Looking for alliances in order to have a joint with other trainers and a lot of kids is another alternative.

Room arrangement: Seating arranged in a circle will facilitate an open atmosphere giving space and encouraging every student to talk. It is not primarily centered on the trainer. Such an arrangement enforces the common responsibility of a group and creates a positive learning atmosphere. There should be no hesitation to transform the available space in order to customize it to the needs of a good training. If no room is available alternatives can be looked for: What about the local community center? And why not hold the training course outside: in Palestine the weather allows this throughout most of the year.

Time boundaries: It is very important to set very clear time boundaries in a training course. A trainer must always be on time! Starting a workshop late is in fact – though unintentional – a type of disrespect to the participants. They dedicate their time to learn something in the workshop. The same goes for activities: a certain time set for them should not be exceeded and training sessions need to end on schedule. And what is true for the trainer is just as valid for the participants. It should be made clear to them that coming late means not just taking the time from the facilitator but also from their fellow students and themselves. Especially in Palestine with check points all over and time not seeming to be important, all effort needs to be put to fight this phenomenon. Sticking to time boundaries can be especially helpful for youth. Once they are clear about the relevance and the meaning of these time boundaries it teaches them to take responsibility and will give them a feeling of order and security.

Didactical means: Visualization significantly helps to maximize the learning effect. Pictures and words are three times more effective than just words. Means of visualization are a flipchart board (or even just an ordinary board) or an overhead projector. Poster size papers can be used to draw models or sum up conclusions and lessons in bullet points. Colored paper cards, colored pens, large drawing papers are helpful means to implement active and participatory training sessions. Finally, the most important material should be handed out in written form to the participants. Yet, a workshop does not depend on didactical means only. If there is no money to finance material, it should not prevent the course from taking place. In the end dealing with shortages encourages creativity which is an important skill in constructive conflict transformation!

Confidentiality: Training conflict transformation touches on many topics that can be very personal and confidential. A sense of security within a workshop allows one to mention, talk