



CoMedY
Community Mediation
for Youth
Theory-based and practical
tools for professionals

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



Introductory note

These pages are the result of a two-year journey (even though it started quite before!) based on both theory and practice. We tried to combine the Community Mediation approach with the international youth mobility and volunteering based on non-formal educational methods.

In the **first section**, edited by Associazione P.E.CO. – Progetti Europei di Cooperazione, we briefly reported on how the CoMedY - Community Mediation for Youth project was drafted and developed. This tool is part of the results stemmed from the project itself.

The **second section**, jointly written by the partner organizations' coordinators and volunteers, collects the descriptions and analyses of the six local projects on Community Mediation and youth work which took place based in the countries which were our partners in the project.

In the **third part**, edited by AssMedCom - Associazione di Mediazione Comunitaria, we present the approach, the methodology and the main techniques used in Community Mediation.

We asked ourselves: is there any suitable name to describe these pages? Were they a manual (given the theoretical part), a toolkit (given the presence of operational tools and practical examples drawn from the application of the approach), or a report (given the description of the general and local projects)?
"Theory-based and practical tools" seemed to us to be the most comprehensive solution.

Not only the contents, but also the target users of these pages belong to different cultural and/or working (or other) contexts. We tried to create a tool that could be used by different users, in particular by:

- People working with youth who would like to know the Community Mediation approach to favour active participation in young adults;
- People with experience in the field of youth active participation who would like to try out some Community Mediation techniques;
- People already having a baseline knowledge on the Community Mediation approach, but who never applied it when working with youth.

We hope these pages will offer useful hints and inspire your work with and for youth.



CoMedY - Community Mediation for Youth is a project funded by the Erasmus+ Programme – Key Action 2, Capacity Building in the Field of Youth of the European Commission. The project was designed and coordinated by the association P.E.CO. - Progetti Europei di Cooperazione; AssMedCom – Associazione di Mediazione Comunitaria supported P.E.C.O. on logistics and methods. The project was implemented between March 2016 and February 2018.

The CoMedY project stemmed from the encounter between Community Mediation practice and the experience in international youth work within non-formal educational contexts when we realized that they share some tools, methods, and possible scopes. For this reason, we decided to propose a project based on three main topics to be developed and interconnected within different international activities: these topics were Community Mediation, non-formal education and youth active participation.

By community mediation, we mean an approach that aims at preventing, managing and transforming conflicts by promoting local community involvement in decision-making processes through its empowerment. The Community Mediation approach has a strong impact on the empowerment and promotion of active participation on the part of local communities; despite its being applied in very different contexts (neighbourhoods, schools, social services, prisons...), it has rarely been used in youth work and it has never been applied in European projects for international youth mobility.

The **main aim** of the project was thus to propose the Community Mediation model as a best practice to be introduced and promoted in the context of youth organizations and, more specifically, of organizations working within the Erasmus+ Programme. We hope that, also thanks to the dissemination of this tool, the Community Mediation approach will become a best practice for the organizations working within the Erasmus+

Programme and, for those who work with and for youth. We believe in Community Mediation as a tool which can facilitate decision-making processes and learning how to manage situations of conflict.

The **countries involved** in the project were Italy, Portugal, and Spain for Europe; Argentina, Mexico, and Peru for Latin-America. The involvement of Latin-American countries is particularly meaningful because Community Mediation was born and developed in this context. The choice of the partner organizations is due to their previous experience on promoting youth participation and empowerment for the communities they were working in. In the same way, the European partners were involved on the basis of their experience in non-formal educational contexts in the topic of youth active participation.

The project emerged from some common **needs**, in particular the Latin American organizations' need to increase their skills in applying non-formal educational methods at a local level and the European organizations' lack of adequate skills to promote active citizenship/participative decision-making processes. We identified two common challenges: youth involvement and participation within local communities, and the local stakeholders' involvement in youth organizations' activities.

The **method** used during the project's activities combined non-formal education techniques (team building, intercultural learning activities, group reflections and evaluations, open space...) with training attended by representatives of partner organizations and local communities. These were based on presentations and case-study group role-plays. We also think of the promotion of youth volunteering (in particular of the European Voluntary Service) as a tool to enhance the connections between the diverse local contexts of the partner organizations. The working language was Spanish. For the specific training on the Community Mediation approach and the monitoring of the local events inspired by Community Mediation, the project benefited from the valuable cooperation of Graciela Frias Ojinaga, MA, who, with the support of AssMedCom, accompanied the process from its inception to the development of possible follow-ups.

From the start, the CoMedY project's **main goal** was to experiment, develop, and promote the Community Mediation approach in the field of youth work. The aim was to create a dedicated space where people could share best practices on youth's active participation in European and Latin American youth organizations.

During the drafting phase of the Project, we set the following **objectives**:

- Gaining knowledge and skills in Community Mediation methods, and learning how to apply them to improve and strengthen the effectiveness of interventions in local contexts; fostering the empowerment of the social groups the organizations are working with; strengthening the exchange with the local authorities;
- Fostering the use of tools and methods promoting youth active participation in the non-profit sector, in volunteering and youth organizations;
- Increasing the partner organizations' effectiveness in advocacy capability, enabling youth NPOs to act as relevant stakeholders and potential ambassadors of the local communities and young people's needs;
- Testing Community Mediation in the field of youth work and sharing best practices and methods for its design, implementation, and evaluation;
- Increasing potential youth involvement within their communities;

- Fostering strategic cooperation amongst youth organizations in the educational and training sectors through the exchange of best practices and the interconnection of organizational patterns and working practices and methods;
- Increasing the administrative, innovative, and international capabilities of youth organizations in the fields of education and training through the tools provided by the Erasmus+ Programme.

These were our starting points. As it often happens, especially when working with Community Mediation, direct knowledge of the contexts and, in particular, relationships with people may alter one's intended course and bring about more or less relevant adjustments. At the beginning, the CoMedY Project had a more "political" edge. Its target were the local communities where the organizations involved were working, rather than their own internal issues. What happened was that we realized how much the Community Mediation approach engaged us on a personal as well as on a professional level: this was clear from our very first partnership meeting in Portugal, in May 2016. The role-plays we used as a training method, where people had to play a part, assuming thus a first-person perspective on the matter at hand, were incredibly powerful in triggering a strong emotional involvement. Our encounter with Community Mediation was then first and foremost a strong personal experience - much more so because of the enriching working environment among the project coordinators, and the way we, as a group, lived through very strong events, such as the earthquake hitting Mexico on September, 19 2017. Our experience was then firstly passed on to colleagues and the beneficiaries of our organizations; and only afterwards, and not in any local context, was proposed outside the working environment to local communities. This was not perceived as a failure, but as a consistent outcome: being able to work with Community Mediation means firstly being able to start mediating with one's own environment.

The **participants** could be roughly divided into two groups: youth workers and coordinators of the partner organizations, and young volunteers. The first explored the Community Mediation methodology and tried to understand how to apply it in the different local contexts, both during the Training Courses and through study visits in Latin America. Volunteers of the European Voluntary Service underwent a preliminary period of volunteering in their respective sending organizations and local communities. At the same time, they received baseline training on the Community Mediation approach in order to contribute to the implementation of a Community Mediation-inspired local project.

During the project, a website was created (www.communitymediation.eu) where visitors can find materials on Community Mediation, EVS volunteers' experiences, and the pages you are reading.

Activities

Kick-off meeting, Arcos de Valvedez – Portugal, 21 - 25 may 2016

The meeting allowed participants to know the partner organizations' work in local contexts. It also provided us the first occasion to start and create a tightknit team.

During this meeting, we discussed the phases of the project, explored its objectives and possible ways of disseminating its results, and defined budget management and evaluation criteria.

Training course on Community Mediation, Arcos de Valvedez – Portugal, 26 - 31 may 2016 and Lima – Peru, 20-26 October 2016

Each organization sent two representatives and a local community stakeholder: their participation was meant to improve knowledge on the Community Mediation approach thanks to the involvement of the local communities. This step was conceived to maximise the project's impact and to make the local event on Community Mediation easier to organize. The training courses, which could be better defined as "awareness-raising events", were given by Graciela Frias Ojinaga, and allowed participants to know about and focus on the Community Mediation approach and its tools. They were also an opportunity to get acquainted with the local best practices and to explore possible models to promote active participation in youth which were being used by partners within the non-formal educational sector. They also facilitated mutual knowledge and exchange among participants, thus creating a cohesive working group.

Study visits in Resistencia – Chaco, Argentina; in Puebla, Mexico and in Huamachuco, Peru, 9 - 19 October 2016

The Portuguese representative went to Mexico, the Italian one to Argentina and the Spanish referent went to Peru.

The main goal of these visits was, first, to get acquainted with the local contexts and sending/hosting organizations of EVS volunteers; and second, to become aware of local practices which were meant to develop active citizenship and Community Mediation. For this reason, a series of visits and meetings was scheduled with the local communities where the organizations are working.

Training period within the sending organizations (2 month between December 2016 and March 2017, depending on the date of departure)

12 EVS volunteers were involved in a two-month training within the respective sending organizations, before departure. The training focused on the topics decided during the training course on Community Mediation. This was also the occasion to prepare volunteers for departure and work together on the documents for their journey. The goal was to create a connection among volunteers based on personal acquaintance as well as the working methods used for the single project and inside the organizations.

European Voluntary Service within hosting organizations (about 6 months between February and October 2017 depending on the date of departure)

The aim of the following international mobilities was to practise and promote the use of Community Mediation and active participation tools in order to carry out a project/event on Community Mediation in all local communities involved. Volunteers were fully involved in each organization's activities and supported the associations in implementing the local projects based on the Community Mediation approach.

The schedule for the European voluntary service was as follows:

| Sending organization | Hosting organization | Volunteer/period |
|---|--|----------------------------------|
| P.E.CO. – Progetti Europei di Cooperazione – (Genoa, Italy) | Proyecto Amigo (Huamachuco, Peru) | Elisa, February - September 2017 |
| P.E.CO. – Progetti Europei di Cooperazione – (Genoa, Italy) | OAJNU - Organización Argentina de Jóvenes para las Naciones Unidas (Resistencia, Chaco, Argentina) | Chiara, March - September 2017 |

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| Associação Social Recreativa Juventude de Vila Fonche/Juventud – (Arcos de Valvedez, Portugal) | Proyecto Amigo (Huamachuco, Peru) | Helder, February - July 2017 |
| Associação Social Recreativa Juventude de Vila Fonche/Juventud – (Arcos de Valvedez, Portugal) | Fundacion Alianzas Rosalico A.C (Puebla, Mexico) | Ana Catarina, March - September 2017 |
| Proyecto Kieu ONGD (Numancia de la Sagra, Spain) | OAJNU - Organización Argentina de Jóvenes para las Naciones Unidas (Cordoba, Argentina) | Ayeisha, April - October 2017 |
| Proyecto Kieu ONGD (Numancia de la Sagra, Spain) | Fundacion Alianzas Rosalico A.C (Puebla, Mexico) | Tamara, March - April 2017 Iris, July - October 2017 |
| Proyecto Amigo (Huamachuco, Peru) | Associação Social Recreativa Juventude de Vila Fonche/Juventud – (Arcos de Valvedez, Portugal) | Angela, February - August 2017 |
| Fundacion Alianzas Rosalico A.C (Puebla, Mexico) | Proyecto Kieu ONGD (Numancia de la Sagra, Spain) | Marisol, April - September 2017 |
| Fundacion Alianzas Rosalico A.C (Puebla, Mexico) | Proyecto Kieu ONGD (Numancia de la Sagra, Spain) | Jacqueline, February - August 2017 |
| Fundacion Alianzas Rosalico A.C (Puebla, Mexico) | Mignanego Cooperativa Sociale Onlus (Mignanego, Italy) + P.E.CO. – Progetti Europei di Cooperazione – (Genoa, Italy) | Ana Karen, February - August 2017 |
| OAJNU - Organización Argentina de Jóvenes para las Naciones Unidas (Salta, Argentina) | Associação Social Recreativa Juventude de Vila Fonche/Juventud – (Arcos de Valvedez, Portugal) | Mauro, February - August 2017 |
| OAJNU - Organización Argentina de Jóvenes para las Naciones Unidas (Cordoba, Argentina) | Mignanego Cooperativa Sociale Onlus (Mignanego, Italy) + P.E.CO. – Progetti Europei di Cooperazione – (Genoa, Italy) | Brenda, February - August 2017 |

Local project on Community Mediation (approximately the 4th month of EVS projects)

Each organization drew up and implemented, in cooperation with EVS volunteers, a project dealing with the Community Mediation approach on a topic which was relevant for them. In the second part of this tool, referents of the different organization recall and analyse their experience.

Final evaluations – redefinitions of project outputs: 19-25 September, Atlixco-Puebla, Mexico and 18-24 October 2017, Genoa, Italy

Referents of each organizations and former EVS volunteers participated to these activities. The goal was to evaluate the project activities, their impact on volunteers, organizations and local communities, to redefine the contents of this tool within the group, review website contents, and identify possible strategies to launch a follow-up to CoMedY.



Partner organizations



Coordinator: P.E.CO. – Progetti Europei di Cooperazione (Italy)

P.E.CO. - Progetti Europei di Cooperazione operates in the sector of youth distress and emargination through the promotion of international youth mobility, intercultural learning and non-formal education.

P.E.CO. deals with the design and coordination of international mobility and volunteer projects promoted by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union, such as youth exchanges, training courses and the European Voluntary Service.

P.E.CO.'s mission is to promote youth mobility projects (such as youth exchanges and the EVS), carried out by a group of youth from Liguria (the Italian region around Genoa) who went through these experiences and wanted to give their peers the opportunity to get acquainted with and live themselves these learning

experiences. The peers targeted by the project belong in particular to the same region and to disadvantaged backgrounds, or are living situations of social distress.

AssMedCom

Associazione di Mediazione Comunitaria

Theoretical know-how: AssMedCom Associazione di Mediazione Comunitaria

The Associazione di Mediazione Comunitaria (AssMedCom) was set up in Genoa, Italy, in 2013 after long-term studies and researches on Conflict Mediation and a process of training/popularization and interventions (started in Genoa in 2009) which followed the cultural approach method to mediation and Community Mediation as mostly applied in several Latin-American countries.

It gathered working experiences on Community Mediation in Genoa by the so-called “Genoese platform on Community Mediation”, an informal group composed by private citizens, public and private social workers, members of the local police, teachers and other professionals. This group formed out of intensive trainings and several initiatives which were carried out during the last years, in Genoa and other parts of Italy, in different sectors: local police, citizenship, the health system, the educational system, and prisons.



Fundación Alianzas Rosalico A.C. (Mexico)

Fundación Alianzas Rosalico A.C. is a non-profit citizen organization, supporting people and communities in situations of poverty: children, teenagers, pregnant women, elderly people in situations of risk, indigenous communities, rural and urban inhabitants who have few resources or suffer from disabilities.

The organisation’s work is based on a social development model where the struggle against poverty and ignorance is made effective by providing training and education to the beneficiaries, with the aim of breaking the poverty cycle. This is enacted through meaningful processes where people become active agents of progress, thus leaving aside a model based on assistance which severely damaged society by promoting individuals’ dependency.

The organisation’s mission is to promote innovative and effective programmes, support a model of social development fighting poverty and ignorance through the provision of education and training to vulnerable groups lacking resources, and to have them become an active part of progress.



Proyecto Amigo (Peru)

Proyecto Amigo was created in 1995 by a group of people’s educators of both sexes in Huamachuco, Sánchez Carrión province, La Libertad region. We are a civic non-profit organization, contributing to strengthen the social protagonism of the disadvantaged strata in society involved in the care of their territory, of natural resources, of human rights and environment, of respect towards children and teenagers. For this reason, one of our pillars is people’s education, community work and networking. We work from an intergenerational,

intercultural and community perspective, stemming from the encounter of different skills and sensibilities, and we embrace and encourage an emancipatory lifestyle. A fundamental aspect of our proposal is the promotion of people's social protagonism so that it can affect the local public agenda on education, ecology and protection of the environment for a better living.



OAJNU - Organización Argentina de Jóvenes para las Naciones Unidas (Argentina)

OAJNU was born on May 2 1995 in Buenos Aires out of the will and initiative of a group of youth (18-30 years). At the beginning, the organization's approach and its work were directly marked by its relation with the UN, highlighted by the implementation of the United Nation Model as the main and almost only project. We are an organization of young people working with and for other youth, sharing tools so that they can have an impact on the society around them. In other words, we are a non-partisan, pluralist non-profit NGO. All the volunteers are aged between 16 and 30 and work in 9 provinces of Argentina and Uruguay. We believe in education as a key tool to transform society: we take it as our starting point when we work with teenagers and children who we consider as the most important agents to intervene in and empower its own contexts, for a society more inclusive, democratic and promoting rights. We define ourselves as young volunteers' strength, empowering peers, to build up a society each time more inclusive, democratic and promoting rights.



Proyecto Kieu ONGD (Spain)

Proyecto Kieu was born in Vietnam from Spanish mothers and Vietnamese aunts. In its childhood it moved to the region of La Sagra in Toledo and here it has been working since 2007. During its first years, it made use of cultural and artistic tools (especially theatrical activities), to set up educational and international cooperation for development projects. From this standpoint, people developed a new awareness, and as a consequence Kieu, Historia de Agua and El Proyecto Laramie, together with other productions and meetings on social theatre were born. Since 2010 we have identified the youth collective of the region as one of the most vulnerable and at the same time nice groups to be accompanied in its development, potentialities and difficulties. Our strategy in this area is based on the combination of existing resources for young people in the different villages and the provision of new resources in the area through international cooperation. The main goal is to create a wider space for development for the young men and women in this area, starting from them in a process which will have an impact on the general population. The PK staff is made of professionals, volunteers and young people coming from different sectors, having different interests and skills, yet who share common values such as the belief in sustainable human development and social transformation.



Associação Social Recreativa Juventude de Vila Fonche/Juventude (Portugal)

The association was born in December 6, year of 1976, having its headquarters in Vila Fonche, Arcos de Valdevez, Viana do Castelo, in the North of Portugal.

From the start, the main goal of this organization was providing spare time activities to youth and the local community. Out of this spirit, it emerged in the Eighties as a primary activity the national and international exchanges between several associations which took place during the summer season as a rule. Several projects were conducted inside and outside the country giving young people the opportunity to know other countries and cultures: countries and cultures which, although being in Europe, were still unknown to them. These kind of projects were conceived so that every young adult could not only participate but also take responsibility in the organization of National and International Work Camps, exchanges, summer camps and sports camps: in doing so, they could live and develop their skills with us.

In addition to international projects targeting young adults, the association has a Kindergarten and Spare Time Activity Center. The Youth Center, located in the village of Arcos de Valdevez, was set up to address the community and young people's need of spare time activities and social education. We also have a hostel, Pousadinha, helping us in the carrying out of our activities and hosting our kindergarten.



Mignanego Società Cooperativa Sociale Onlus - EVS-dedicated hosting organization (Italy)

Mignanego Società Cooperativa Sociale Onlus was born 1996 from a group of young women, moved by the desire to create a tight-knit environment, active in Genoa and Mignanego, in the outskirts of Genoa. We are an A type cooperative, meaning that we design, organize and manage services for people. Our aim is to satisfy the educational and social needs and to raise awareness on social work, which in our view is an opportunity for personal development and a value in itself. We work with early childhood, we manage two kindergartens/creches and offer consultancy and support to families. We support minors with individual and group activities and offer tailored interventions for students with special educational needs. We organise summer and sports camps, we deal with kids benefiting from special educational provision outside school, and we carry out activities to prevent distress and abuse. We offer assistance to the elderly, disabled people and women in difficult situations - we also give particular attention to the struggle against gender violence. We develop activities to support migrants. We offer intercultural mediation, design social inclusion interventions, organize cultural activities aimed at promoting integration, set up info-desks and carry out intercultural workshops in schools.



PART 2: Local projects revolving around Community Mediation approach and youth work

Alianzas Mediación - Fundación Alianzas Rosalico A. C. - Mexico

Concerned area: Middle-class urban area

Field of intervention: Families joining the organization's workshops and Fundación Alianzas Rosalico personnel.

City and nation: Puebla, Pue. Mexico

Duration: Six months

Presentation

The aim of our project is to open a dialogue between people living a conflict, through the intervention of volunteers. Using mediation tools, volunteers promoted dialogue facilitation between the party concerned. They tried to propose a wider view on the conflict, hoping this would lead to a transformation of the situation of conflict. We chose two cases: the first one concerns people working for the Fundación Alianzas Rosalico; the second one concerns a family attending a community workshop carried out by the organization.

Justification

We chose the first case because it directly concerns people working within the Fundación.

The second case is a testimony to the influence the Fundación has on the families in the community. The families themselves know about the project and volunteer to join. The Fundación chooses the conflict to manage on its complexity and duration.

General goal

Implementing some of the tools used in mediation to promote dialogue between the parties concerned in a conflict where the Fundación Alianza Rosalico and/or the community attending its programmes are involved.

Specific goals

Leading the parties towards a smooth communication, fostering through dialogue a better relationship between the parties; allowing the parties to express, acknowledge, and identify the conflict, to look at it from a different point of view and allow possible solutions to emerge.

Direct and indirect beneficiaries

Fundación Alianzas Rosalico and some workers belonging to this organization: the case of David and Raul, who collaborated with the organization and lived an ongoing conflict because David, though very young, had been appointed supervisor and Raul, a grown man with wider experience, felt ill at ease with David as his boss.

Families actively participating to the Fundación's programmes: the case of Daniel and Marisol, a mother and son spending all day quarrelling and calling each other names; this situation is reflected by the child's poor

performance at school; his mother has no authority on him and her husband hinders her efforts in that sense).

Project's development

Phases

Identification of situations of conflicts concerning on the one hand the Fundación's personnel and, on the other, the families attending the Fundación's workshops.

Activities

Dialogue facilitation sessions based on mediation tools, where the parties had the opportunity to face conflict-related issues, thus promoting communication and transformation of the conflict.

Schedule

One two- or three-hour meeting per week, on Friday.

Contribution and participation of the EVS volunteers

The volunteers' main job was to co-facilitate the meetings: their responsibility was to support people during the session and their interventions, taking notes of important information and reached agreements, and taking pictures. Afterwards, the volunteers monitored the situations and the results of the agreements.

Efficacy

The Fundación's managers welcomed favourably the change in the workers' attitude, disposition, and functioning: after four sessions, the two workers reached an agreement.

In the second case, the family was directly affected: faniel and Marisol discovered new ways of communicating and listened to things they did not know about each other.

Results

The Fundación's workers proposed some agreements which were adhered to during the following weeks; the monitoring activity showed that between the two there was a better, less conflictual relationship even though new issues of discussion emerged with each encounter. Their job got better, affecting favourably the Fundación's productivity. These days, the two workers have a better relationship; even though they sometimes argue with each other, this happens in a less negative way than before the sessions of dialogue facilitation.

The agreements drawn up by the family worked during the first week, but, session after sessions, new conflicts emerged: issues of conflicts emerged which involved other family members. During the third and fourth meeting, the husband was involved: agreements were proposed which were not honoured and new conflicts emerged. The last scheduled meeting was cancelled because of the couple's separation; they were told that the meeting could be postponed. After some days, the family met again, and the equipe advised them against the prolongation of the meetings, because the equipe felt they did not have the necessary experience to address such complex conflicts, involving so many people. The equipe suggested that they turned to a therapist working on family issues.

Mode of evaluation

Each meeting started with a discussion on the adherence to the previous agreements; the people concerned then examined the agreements on the basis of how much they had been adhered to, proposed possible changes and/or committed themselves to try again and honour stick to them.

Obstacles/ things that worked / suggestions

We believe that the main obstacle to the success of the project was the schedule, due to the working hours of the volunteers, the project coordinator, and the participants. It was hard to meet at the same time, and the same day, because people were not always available.

Connections with Community Mediation

The tools employed to facilitate dialogue are used in mediation; we also strived to make the meetings as close as possible to a mediation session.



Jóvenes Comediantes - Proyecto Kieu ONGD - Spain

Our project was based in **La Sagra**, a region in Spain known for its construction industry and brick production. Before the crisis, many people from the South of Madrid moved here. After the crisis, the Sagra area was now impoverished: people could not afford their houses anymore and there were few working opportunities. Sagra's population is for its majority made up of young adults at risk of social exclusion, and violence and teenage pregnancies have greatly increased during the crisis: this condition was particularly evident in the area where two schools were based: a Numancia de la Sagra and Esquivas. It needs to be said that in this region the overall unemployment rate and the youth unemployment rate are higher than the Spanish average: youth unemployment is nearly 10 points higher.

We chose to divide this project into **three phases**: during the first phase, we started to select schools where we could intervene with our project: we realized then that every school had specific needs. In the second phase, dedicated to the training in techniques of assertive, non-violent communication, we decided to set out two different working themes for each school. During the third phase, started after the training in schools, we collected the students' testimonies on what had (possibly) changed at school or in the classroom behaviour.

The **general goal** of the local project was to improve school life - schools are the place where students spend half their days - through the use of communication techniques drawn from Community Mediation.

Our specific goals were to gain knowledge about the schools in the area, to foster students' empowerment on their everyday problems and conflicts, to promote conflict management from a different point of view and, in particular, to address the female students who were facing violence in the common rooms, and aggressions and spite in their everyday life, because of their gender.

A further specific aim was to create connections between students in different schools, so that they could talk about the types of violence they are confronted with, at school and outside, and to share best practices between schools or groups of students.

During the second phase of the project, we carried out **four meetings** in each school. In the first school, where there was a pre-trained group of students interested in working on well-being and conflict resolution in the classroom, we proposed a work on assertivity, empathy, and non-violent language. With the same group, during a weekend in Toledo, we shared experiences and best practices; kids could talk about some facets of classroom violence with students of two other schools from the Sagra region.

In the second school, where the students hadn't received any previous training, we tried to create a group to work with in the following year. We tried to understand what happened in schools with violence issues and, once acknowledged the main problems, we worked on empowering the role of the whole student body to prevent aggressions or violence. We tried to achieve this goal first, by empowering students in their verbal skills (assertive and non-violent language) as a method to act against violence, and second, by creating a mentoring group to get back to in the case of an aggression.

The **two (Mexican) volunteers** participating with the project coordinator to the students' training were young women who had already been trained in communication techniques and were both attending the Psychology faculty. Their presence in the classroom and their contribution to the training proved essential to the realization of our goals and the understanding of the students' needs.

Classroom life was **positively affected** by the training; we count as a second direct effect of the training the students' attempts at using the techniques learnt during the meetings, something we observed during the groups' evaluation. Before the end of the school year, the first school (Numancia de la Sagra) carried out an evaluation where students could report episodes where mediation techniques had been successfully employed. In the same spirit, one of the volunteers collected in the second school testimonies of how the techniques had been used at school and outside: as in the first school, the reports attested the effectiveness of the learned techniques.

In the second school, the school's managers provided a feedback reporting on the better conditions they observed in classroom life.

If we look back at our project, we may acknowledge that the second phase needed more time; yet, this hadn't been possible, since one of our volunteers stayed in Spain for just six months. It wasn't possible to

expand on the chosen topics during the students' training and the time devoted to each topic was, in general, insufficient. From an organizational viewpoint, the best aspect of our project was having two trained and participative volunteers: this made the process easier in all the project's phases.



Facilitando el Dialogo en mi Convivencia Escolar (Facilitating dialogue when living together at school)
- Proyecto Amigo - Huamachuco – Peru

Concerned area: Huamachuco, Peru (Sánchez Carrión), 52459 inhabitants. Land of the ancient Wachimines and dominion of the Huamachucos, cradle of languages, cultures and traditions, of ancient customs, dances, local food. Huamachuco means “Gorro de halcón” (hawk hat).

Field of intervention: Working minors, environment, human rights.

City and nation: Huamachuco, Peru

Duration: 23 June 2017 - 25 July 2018

Presentation

This project focuses on awareness-raising on Community Mediation in education, targeting fifth- (and last) grade students of the Marquina Nemesio Vargas High School. Two training workshops were proposed: they

were conceived as a space where participants could know each other and think. After having identified the most frequent conflicts among teenagers and among the young people in Huamachuco, students put on a performance. They found the causes and the consequences of conflicts and proposed alternative solutions. The elaboration of the plot and the rehearsals were designed as a game, thus allowing the students to focus on what they were doing and to create a more natural and sincere representation.

Justification

The students we had been working with were impulsive young adults, lacking social skills and with a poor management of their frustration. In schools, conflicts are usually played down because differences among students are not properly addressed. Moreover, the lack of a loving and secure emotional relationship with the parents hampers the students' proper development.

General goal

Highlighting the importance and benefits of resorting to a peaceful resolution of conflicts and to mediation tools promoting a peace culture.

Specific goals

Taking the students' personal experiences as our starting point, learning to recognise the different styles of conflict management. Providing Community Mediation tools, which are designed to manage and resolve conflicts in an appropriate way; inspiring a stronger sense of cooperation between the participants, promoting respect towards diversity.

Direct and indirect beneficiaries

The direct beneficiaries were 25 students in the fifth grade of Nemesio Vargas Marquina High School, who were involved in every phase of the Community Mediation project. The indirect beneficiaries were the 213 students of the same school (first to fourth grade), 12 teachers and the principal, who assisted to the performance promoted by the fifth-grade students.

Project's development

Phases

The project consisted of four phases: 1- Understanding conflicts; 2- The mediator's skills in conflict resolution; 3- How to put on a performance; 4- The performance itself.

Activities

1 - Self-awareness, communication, conflict prevention, empathy; 2 - Learning how to be assertive, case studies of young people in situations of conflict, mediation techniques for conflict resolution, conflicts and social issues among Huamachuco's young population; 3 - Mapping the problem: why? How? Where? When? Arranging a performance; 4 - Rehearsals (on addiction).

Schedule

23 June – Meeting with the pedagogical supervisor; 27 June – Presentation of the Community Mediation project; 4 July – Understanding conflicts; 11 July – The mediator's skills in conflict resolution; 18 July – Planning with the principal and arrangement of the performance; 25 July – Performance.

Contribution and participation of the EVS volunteers

Elisa and Helder participated actively to the whole process of organization, planning, and provision of the project with the students; they proposed strategies to use during the two workshops and led the workshops along with the supervisor, showing commitment, solidarity, and respect towards students and teachers.

Efficacy and results

- Approval of the Community Mediation project by the principal and the teaching body of Nemesio Vargas Marquina High School;
- Awareness-raising on Community Mediation strategies with the fifth-grade students;
- Performance given in front of all the students of Nemesio Vargas Marquina High School, using mediation strategies.
- Ongoing good inter-institutional relationship between the Nemesio Vargas Marquina High School and Proyecto Amigo, aiming at new collaborations.

Mode of evaluation

An ongoing supervision was carried out by analysing the workshops at different times: at the beginning, starting from the expectations reported, following their development through observation and, in the last phase, with a global perspective.

We concentrated on: exercises, contents, methods, facilitators, suggestions. We used the pizza evaluation method.

Obstacles/ things that worked / suggestions

Obstacles: the students' other obligations prevented a wider involvement of the participants in the actual performance.

The greatest achievements of the projects were:

- carrying out a project with students coming from rural areas;
- better interpersonal relationships between the fifth-grade students;
- the cultural exchange during the delivery of the project between students, teachers and European volunteers;
- the experiences gained from being involved in this project had been meaningful, promoting the personal and professional growth of the people involved.

Our suggestions:

- Monitoring interpersonal relationships within the schools;
- Designing educational programmes for the prevention of school violence.

Connections with Community Mediation

The project carried out within Nemesio Vargas Marquina High School is linked to Community Mediation - even though it had not been possible to carry out an action of educational mediation in itself, the students' awareness was raised on mediation tools. Those tools and strategies were put into practice during the several meeting we had, and will allow the students to avoid or resolve peacefully conflicts within their most immediate contexts: their families, friends, and school.



MeDiaCon (Mediation, Dialogue and Awareness - bringing peace to communities) - OAJNU - Organización Argentina de Jóvenes para las Naciones Unidas - Argentina

Concerned area: Argentina - the Córdoba region, La Falda city. The event took place in a religious structure, "Casa Betania", during the yearly "National Integration" (NI) meeting of OAJNU volunteers. No direct relationship was built with La Falda community since the event took entirely place within the structure and concerned volunteers from different parts of the country.

Field of intervention: the same organization and OAJNU's volunteers

City and nation: La Falda, Cordoba, Argentina.

Duration: March - May: analysis/ observation; June: introduction to Community Mediation; June – September: in-house training.

Presentation

The project consisted in introducing the organization to mediation and its tools. With this goal in mind, workshops were carried out to raise awareness on the importance of dialogue and of conflict resolution/management on an organizational level. The main event in the project took place during the yearly "National Integration" where volunteers from each province meet to learn and master new tools. During the meeting, several workshops were carried out having as their goal to foster personal reflection and knowledge of the organization's inner life, focussing in particular on existing conflicts and resolution techniques.

Justification

We aim at training volunteers who are able to function in low-risk areas as well as in vulnerable contexts; we found in Community Mediation an excellent way to proote the volunteers' empowerment. We also held a

strong belief in the multiplier effect of sharing skills and best practices within the organization. Finally, OAJNU believes in the values promoted by mediation and, first and foremost, in peace promotion. In a country where violence and lack of respect are part of the everyday life, we think that building a culture of peace is a much-needed work.

General goal

Raising awareness and promote the volunteers' empowerment to implement dialogue and Community Mediation as a resolution method within OAJNU and the communities.

Specific goals

Promoting awareness on the importance of communication, dialogue, and interpersonal respect in cases where a conflict could emerge; promoting youth's active participation in the resolution of social conflict in different vulnerable local contexts; imparting knowledge to the volunteers on mediation as a practice, so that they could use it within the organization as well as in the world at large; giving the social sectors OAJNU is working with the tools promoting mediation and a peaceful resolution of conflicts; raising awareness among the beneficiaries of our training courses and workshops on the importance of mediation as a practice.

Direct and indirect beneficiaries

The direct beneficiaries of the project were the organization's volunteers.

The indirect beneficiaries were the communities targeted by OAJNU with its projects, especially children and young adults.

We believe that this sort of empowerment can trigger a powerful multiplier effect with the volunteers as its agents in their social contexts and the projects they are working with.

Our aim in training the OAJNU's volunteers is to have them take back to their provinces and their workplaces, in their social and educational projects, what they have learnt, putting into practice techniques, tools, and principles of mediation, in order to build better relationships.

Project's development

Phases

1. Analysis/observation; 2. General training (NI); 3. Specific Training (local branches).

Activities

1. Observation of the local context: groups of volunteers, communities we have been working with;
2. Awareness-raising with the group of the volunteers about the importance of using Community Mediation to solve conflicts;
3. Workshops on Community Mediation tools.

Schedule

March – April – May: analysis/observation;

June: general training;

July - August: specific training. Training in Community Mediation and drafting of projects, introduction of Community Mediation within OAJNU's working method.

Contribution and participation of EVS volunteers

The two volunteers were both involved in the local projects they were working with. These projects are conceived as part of the Organization's planning work and aim at investigating and observing the context and the communities.

The volunteers in OAJNU Cordoba drafted the project which also drawn from the one originally proposed by the local COMEDY group; she worked along the EVS volunteers in OAJNU Chaco to present and organise the training during the NI. The volunteers were each responsible for the following workshops in their own branch.

Efficacy and results

Volunteers are become more aware of what Community Mediation is about and of its connection with the Organization's projects. They began to reconsider the projects under this light and to complete them with some mediation tools. There is a proposal of looking for external collaborations in order to receive a professional training. Learning and training are still a long-term objective: we need to keep on working. Up to this day, our main result has been the awareness-raising of the volunteers: they acknowledge the importance of keeping on growing, learning, and introducing these tools in their everyday work.

Mode of evaluation

Group discussion after the in-house training.

Connection with Community Mediation

Before being a technique, mediation is indeed a lifestyle aiming at the active participation of everybody. OAJNU has already been organizing several projects revolving around Community Mediation: our aim is not to create something brand new, but to strengthen what has already been done and is being done as an organization.



Concerned area: Arcos de Valdevez, a small Portuguese town in the North of Portugal, in the Miño region, Viana do Castelo district.

Field of intervention: Children and teenagers joining in the daily activities during summer vacation.

City and nation: Arcos de Valdevez, Portugal

Duration: 1st part: three months and a half (beginning of May - mid-August); 2nd part: a whole day during which we made a video. As a conclusion, we made the video public.

Presentation

This project was born out of the concern we share about the public opinion and everyday actions expressed on gender difference.

Since gender inequality is a quite complicated issue to tackle in a society ridden with stereotypes, the appointed goals were not too ambitious, even though we would have liked them to be so. Dealing with this issue means a long-term work; since we did not have enough time, we set as our goal being able to make small changes in the habits and ideas of the children and teenagers we are working with, and in the context around us in order to give life to a society where critical thinking and an open mind are possible, and where changes are brought about.

We carry out proactive activities based on non-formal education in order to understand the issue of gender inequality and bring about changes. At the end of the project, we made a video to share what we had learned.

Justification

Portugal is one of the European countries with a higher rate of gender inequality - a situation concerning (in both senses!) the European countries, but also Latin-American countries. The reason why we were drawn to carry out this project was that, in Portugal, we face a society ruled by stereotypes and where women have to take care of household duties as well as her work outside the house, while men are working with no other responsibilities. This alarming situation led us to engage in having an impact on the society we are living in at the moment and to behave as agents of change.

General goal

Fostering critical awareness of gender equality within the community of Arcos de Valdevez to encourage children, youth, and adult to act as agents of change.

Specific goals

Working with youth of the Associação Social Recreativa Juventude de Vila Fonche / Juventude de Arcos de Valdevez on the social issues they face regarding gender inequality in their everyday life; design a proactive workshop based on non-formal education as an action affecting children and young participants; make a video where the participants could express what they had learned and understood, and share by this means a message with the community.

Direct and indirect beneficiaries

Direct beneficiaries are the children and young adults we are working with. We can consider as indirect beneficiaries the association's working staff and the parents and families of the children. On another level, the community of Arcos de Valdevez itself and the EVS volunteers profit, as indirect beneficiaries, of the project.

Project's development

Phases

Analysis; planning; preparation of the materials for the activities; creation and divulgation of the video (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Le-tb6_DGY).

Activities

1. Energizer; 2. Is there any equality? 3. Sex or gender; 4. Family role-play; 5. Video recordings.

Schedule

Analysis: May; Planning: June-July; Preparation of the materials: July-August; Event: 21 August 2017; Video recordings: 22-28 August.

Contribution and participation of EVS volunteers

Since one of the volunteers asked to learn how to coordinate a project, both the volunteers were entrusted with the drafting, planning, and execution of the project itself.

Efficacy and results

Our work had the strongest effect in the moments where children could share with their peers what they had learned; for instance, when it was asked: "The blue glass is for boy or girls", children explained that it was for anybody who wanted to use it- Moreover, the video shared on the social networks had a positive impact in the families concerned by the association's work.

Mode of evaluation

Observation of language and behaviours used, after the event. Recording and sharing the video: during the recordings we strive to make apparent what everybody had learned and online we measured the impact of the video by the number of shares, views, and likes.

Obstacles/ things that worked / suggestions

The first obstacle was being late in the planning of the project due to a lack of motivation, caused by poor collaboration and teamwork.

The willingness of the workers and the supervisor in monitoring the activity and being able to agree on a planned programme with a precise schedule were both positive factors in the execution of the project.

Another factor to consider was the change in the activities during the event due to a lack of time (the activities were carried out as described in this document).

We suggest that future project designer think of activities more suitable to the age of the participants: some were targeted at 15-years old and other at 10-years old.

Connections with Community Mediation

We deal with a social issue concerning the global community - and the Portuguese community as a consequence - and that means we face a community issue which needs to be solved. In the case of this project, we worked with a group of people who had different levels of awareness: they have internalized the situation day by day, during the activities. Acknowledging that anybody could take upon themselves to change the

shared habits concerning respect towards women in their own homes, schools, social environment, is a fundamental step to learn how to be assertive and have a critical mind. Each participant identified a problem, telling how he/she was feeling about it and how people could feel about it - they were then asked to explain how they imagine (or would like) a transformation starting with the smallest aspects of life.



CoMedYGE – Awareness-raising workshops on the Community Mediation approach for youth workers - P.E.CO. and AssMedCom - Italy

The CoMedYGE project was designed and implemented by P.E.CO. in cooperation with AssMedCom. As the name suggests, the project consisted in reproducing the CoMedY project's approach, but this time at a local level and in Genoa, the city where both P.E.CO. and AssMedCom are based.

The project was implemented between March and July 2017. After a first preparatory phase, six awareness-raising workshops on the Community Mediation approach took place. Initially, they were supposed to target youth workers, such as educators or volunteers in organizations working with young adults (up to 25 years of age). Most of the people who showed interest in the topic, though, worked with asylum seekers and refugees (minors and adults alike). Most people attending the workshops were employed in that area. The total number of participants was twenty-one, a number which could vary depending on the meeting: the minimum number of people attending was ten.

The project was limited to the city of Genoa: organizations working especially in Genoa's historical city centre were contacted and the workshops took place at the Informagiovani (Youth Centre) of Genoa Municipality in Palazzo Ducale.

The awareness-raising course was proposed as a series of 6 workshops of 3 hours each (from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.), every two weeks. The workshops were conceived as *"Pills of Mediation"*, thus proposing a baseline

training, more practical than theoretical, on the Community Mediation approach. During the workshops, we used presentations (to illustrate the main concepts), as well as discussions, role-plays, and other participative learning methods used also within non-formal education sessions: for example, some elements were drawn from the Theatre of the Oppressed. In between one meeting and the other, participants were asked to meet, in person or via e-mail, in order to work on a case-study, the theme around which our workshops revolved. The first five workshops concentrated on the awareness-raising process, whereas the last one focussed on the simulation of “real” situations to put in practice what had been proposed during the training.

EVS volunteers, hosted by Cooperativa Mignanego, were mainly involved in the implementation phase of the workshops, both as participant observers and to support logistics. At the end of each meeting they organized the materials which were to be proposed during the workshop and drew a report based on their observation.

Among the **main justifications** for the project, we have identified: a lacking or unclear communication within organizations; the energy and commitment asked of the educators in their daily work with youth, requiring strategies to promote communication and prevent conflicts; the usefulness of a toolkit to favour relations among young adults, where conflicts and lack of communication are widespread.

The project’s main goal was raising youth organizations’ awareness on the Community Mediation approach, with the aim of providing educators and volunteers with some tools to improve communication and conflict management with the youth they work with and within their respective organizations.

Other goals we aimed at were:

- Testing out the CoMedY model in a safe environment, other than the international contest of Co-MeDY;
- Improving the active role of youth organizations at a local level;
- Empowering youth workers in treating potential conflicts and in general improving their communication both with colleagues and with the young people they are working with,
- Raising awareness among youth on the Community Mediation approach in an indirect way, through the educators’ experience.

The project’s direct **beneficiaries** were the professionals directly involved in the awareness-raising course, as well as the awareness-raising process facilitators themselves, EVS volunteers obviously included. We think we can count among the indirect beneficiaries the people the participants are and will be working with (users and colleagues alike), P.E.C.O., and AssMedCom.

Concerning project **evaluation mechanisms**, participants were asked to fill in an anonymous evaluation questionnaire: questions were closed, but participants could also fill them in with their own ideas on how to improve the methods and/or the logistic organization of the course; afterwards, the equipe carried out an internal final evaluation.

The project was organised around 5 **phases**:

- Definition of the training modules and of the project equipe;
- Promotion of the initiative and contact with possible beneficiaries;
- Implementation of the awareness-raising course;
- Evaluation of the process;
- Identification of possible follow-ups.

The **activities and schedule** of the project were so defined:

1) March-April 2017:

- Creation of the P.E.CO. – AssMedCom equipe and first structure of the course (number of workshops– macro topics);
- Creation of a list of associations/institutions and some informal groups, to whom propose the awareness-raising course;
- Preparation of an informative flyer to use as call for a meeting;
- Contact with key actors to be involved through a brief questionnaire to be filled in by potential participants, so to know the needs and skills which would be useful or needed in the course;
- Elaboration of a tutoring system and revision of the awareness-raising course and working groups between one meeting and the other.

2) May – July 2017 Implementation of the awareness raising course:

- 4th May “Mediation, a way towards the culture of community participation”;
- 18th May “Conflict and its transformation, a complex reality”;
- 7th June “Communicative skills to manage conflicts – use of the methodology of the Theatre of the Oppressed”;
- 21st June “Socio-cognitive skills for cooperation and living together”;
- 5th July “Socio-cognitive skills in daily life”;
- 19th July final role-play;
- Participants’ working groups (in presence or online, where implemented);
- Equipe workshops to monitor the course.

3) August – October 2017

- Analysis of the evaluation questionnaires and sharing of the results with AssMedCom;
- Contacts with participants to propose other interventions and to invite them to the final presentation of the international project during the final seminar held in Genoa in October.

Impact and results:

Participants were very different from each other in terms of former experience and training, as well as ethnicity. Notwithstanding their differences, the participants - who were people working on the same sector, but did not know each other before - managed to form a real team. The project reinforced AssMedCom’s capacity to work at a local level, giving it the opportunity to create a baseline model for future awareness raising to Community Mediation interventions, and allowed to enlarge the contact network and to create useful synergies for the future.

Along with the participants, also EVS volunteers and facilitators themselves increased their knowledge and skills in Community Mediation and in team work.

In the long run, awareness raising to Community Mediation is going to help improving the working environment and the communication among professionals and between professionals and youth/users in general. For what concerns P.E.CO., CoMedYGE was instrumental in increasing the visibility of the international Project at a local level and to make contacts with other associations.

The main **difficulties** can be summed up as:

- little time to organize the whole course;
- little active participation in working groups. It may be that the participation format/rules should have been better explained when the participants enrolled;

- from a logistic point of view, meeting in the morning affected some people's participation and/or caused many participants to arrive late/leave early. That had an impact on the chosen methods and structure of the course;
- coexistence of other working commitments for the equipe, in particular concerning P.E.CO.'s staff participation;
- it was, for all members of the equipe, the first experience as facilitators/trainers on Community Mediation and it was the first time we worked together as a team: it was a challenge, but also an opportunity for personal growth and a better mutual acquaintance;
- the EVS volunteers had to face a linguistic barrier, as the course was entirely in Italian; that limited their interaction with the other participants.

Possibile **improvements**:

- timing;
- the topics chosen at the beginning of the course was wide and ambitious - it's better to concentrate on fewer topics but to work on them on a deeper level;
- the evaluation phase should be further explored.

The best aspects: getting in touch with so many different people; the request, at the end of the course, of other awareness raising/training modules; knowing people who wanted to improve the communities they are working in; the satisfaction for having completed the project.

Equipe's opinion: generally, we felt at ease, even though we went through some moments of anxiety and frustration. The equipe was fortified, we worked together in a flexible way, supporting each other.

Relation with Community Mediation: apart from the awareness-raising topic itself, the whole project was developed with an objective in mind, that was, implementing the methodological elements in Community Mediation to facilitate common work.



Part three: approach, methodology and main tools and techniques within Community Mediation

First area: Community Mediation

Sharing starting point. An overall notion of Mediation.

Mediation is a **dialogue-based** approach to existing or potential conflicts. The use of mediation tries to re-establish **communication** whenever and for whatever reason it is interrupted or frayed.

Before being a technique, mediation is a lifestyle aiming at active participation from everyone.

Possible areas of application

Already applied in Italy

- Within the family (family mediation)
- In schools (educational mediation)
- In migration contexts (intercultural mediation)
- Between States
- In civil cases and in the trading sector

Under-represented in Italy

- With and within communities (Community Mediation)
- In healthcare
- Within organizations
- In prison
- In criminal cases
- Reparative mediation
- Restorative mediation

Thinking about the meaning of the word “community”: towards a possible definition of Community Mediation

A **community** can be described as:

A specific group of people living in a specific geographical area, sharing a common culture, who are organized around a social structure and explicitly aware of their own identity.

The body of people living on the same territory or having common origins, traditions, ideas, and interests: a rural/urban community; national/international community; ethnic/linguistic community; the scientific community, the community scientists belong to; the human community, the assembly of men. Group of people living together: a family community, the family; religious community, of religious following the same rule (Garzanti Italian Dictionary).

The term “community”, from the Latin *communis*, “common”, is commonly used in everyday language. Yet, it may also be found in academic discourse and disciplines: it is mainly employed (with specialistic meanings,

not always easy to define) in Anthropology and Sociology, but in Philosophy, Law, and the Political Sciences as well. In the Social Sciences, the word has a double meaning. In classic Sociology, the word describes a specific kind of social relationships on which some groups, where belonging has an all-encompassing nature, rest. The term conjures notions of small village communities, but it may also refer to the national community, families, and any social unit with a high degree of integration; it is also the prototypic way to refer to the traditional societies before the contemporary model. In contemporary Sociology, though, community is usually synonymous with local community (Treccani Encyclopaedia).

Community Mediation, why?

Because we see it as a **process** made of different **actions** (be they of a cultural, social, educational nature, etc. whose aim is to work on the territory and **with** the territory to proceed from mere coexistence (living *alongside* each other) to living together (*with* each other), thus generating a principle of positive interaction. Such activities aim at creating the conditions for communities to explore new ways to prevent, manage, and transform their conflicts (De Luise, D. e Morelli, M., 2016: 165).

Other possible definitions

Community Mediation is defined as: “The practice connecting community members, within the community and with the community’s means. In Community Mediation, the civil society - made up of individuals, families, associations, NGOs, and enterprises - gets involved in an attempt to self-manage its own conflicts. Its aim is to acknowledge the skills communities possess, not only to trigger a sense of responsibility, but also to manage existing differences before these may lead to violent conflicts” (Bonafé-Schmitt e Dahan, 1999, in Domínguez and Conforti, 2016).

It is a mode of intervention carried out by a neutral third party between social or institutional actors going through a period of crisis. The professional creates bridges or links between the social agents (or actors) in order to prevent and/or solve and/or reformulate possible conflicts. In this way, s/he improves the communication - with the ultimate aim of creating the conditions for living together in intercultural contexts (Carlos Giménez, AssMedCom training material, Javier Domínguez, October 2016).

It is a form of intervention carried out by a professional acknowledged as the mediator in the community environment, who works in the public or private sector, and who makes use of the community’s knowledge and resources, on the basis of Community Mediation principles and techniques, in social/community conflicts. The mediator thus becomes the professional “conductor” in the case. (AssMedCom training material, Javier Domínguez, October 2016).

An integral/integrated notion of Mediation

Our notion of Community Mediation is not meant to be yet another specific skill or branch within mediation.

Its aim is not to offer an exclusive and specific training to qualify as a “Community Mediator”.

Its aim is, on the one hand, to give legitimacy to the different skills or different “sorts” of mediators (family, intercultural, criminal, natural, etc.) already possess; and, on the other hand, to raise awareness that interdisciplinary integration and harmonization of such skills is vital, and that we should use them in hands-on interventions at proper times.



Community Mediation: the main factors in our perspective

- Real bottom-up process;
- Search for and involvement of key actors;
- Institutional involvement;
- Overcoming the fragmentation found in the investigated area or context;
- Constant coordination and monitoring;
- Whenever possible, co-mediation

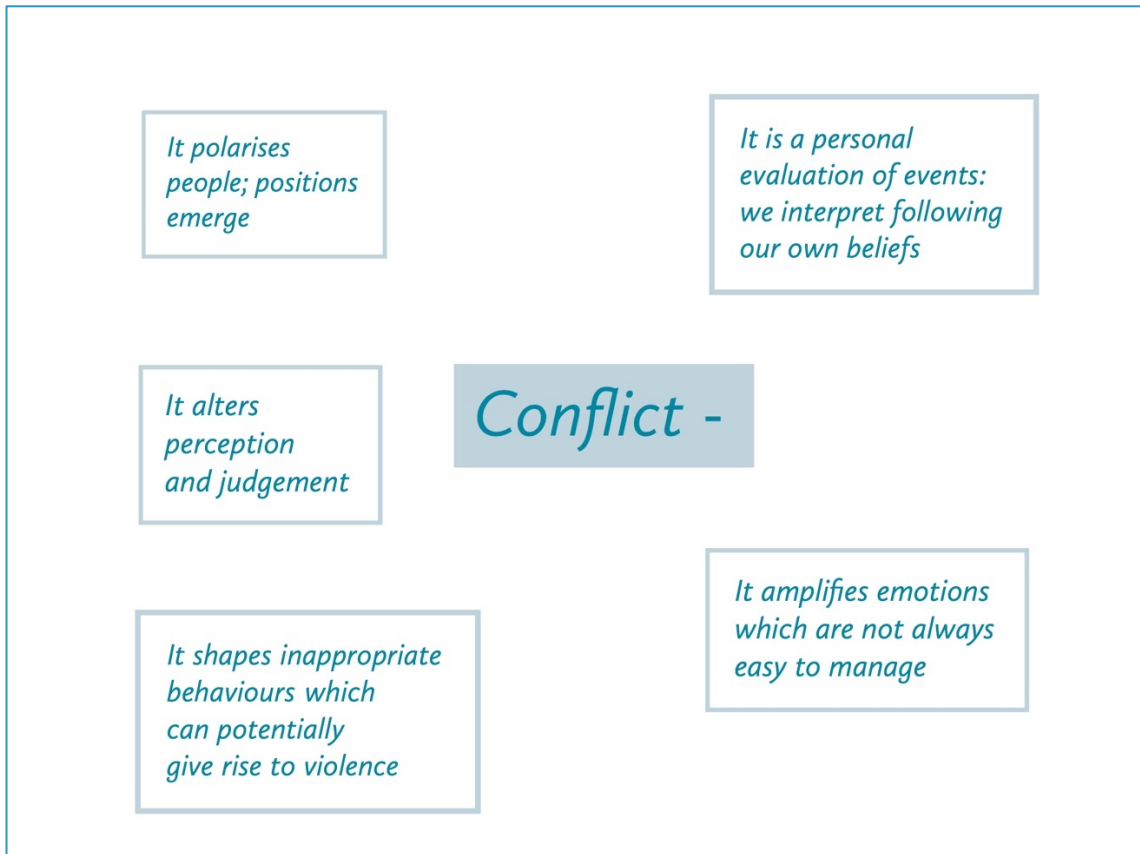
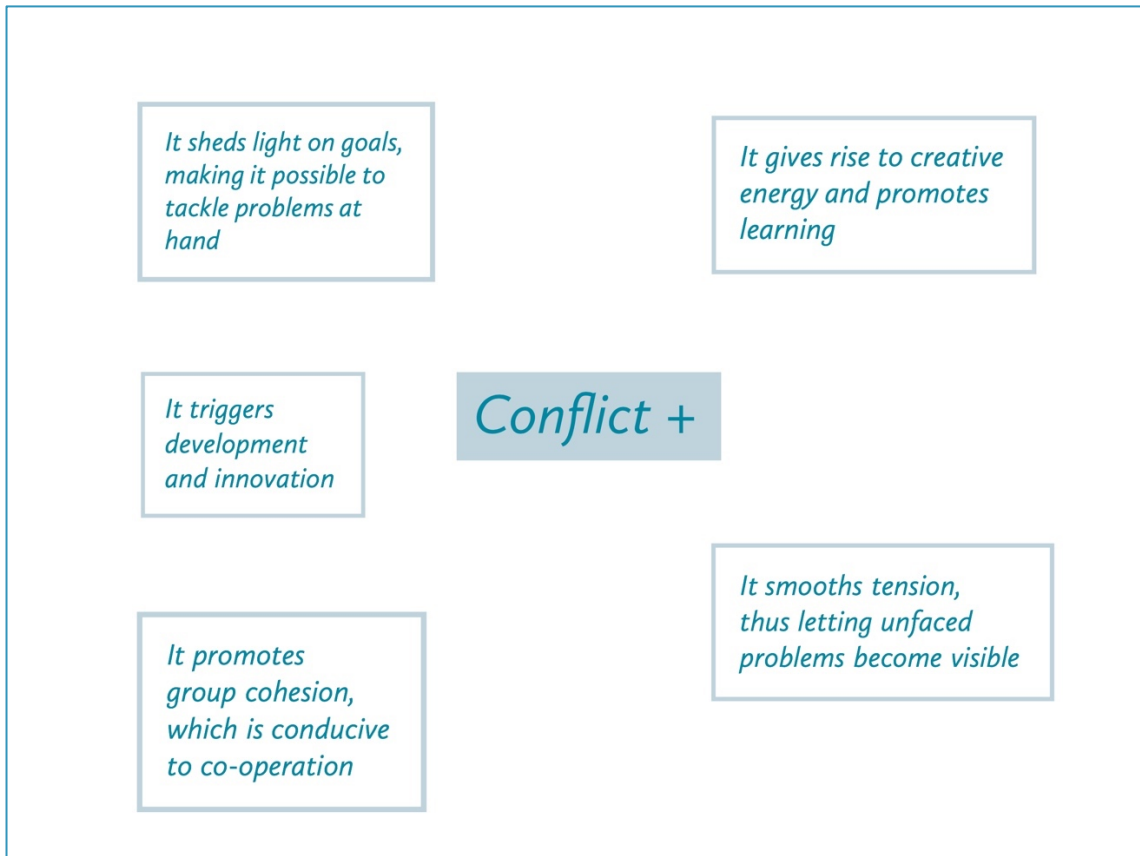
Second area: elements of Conflictology

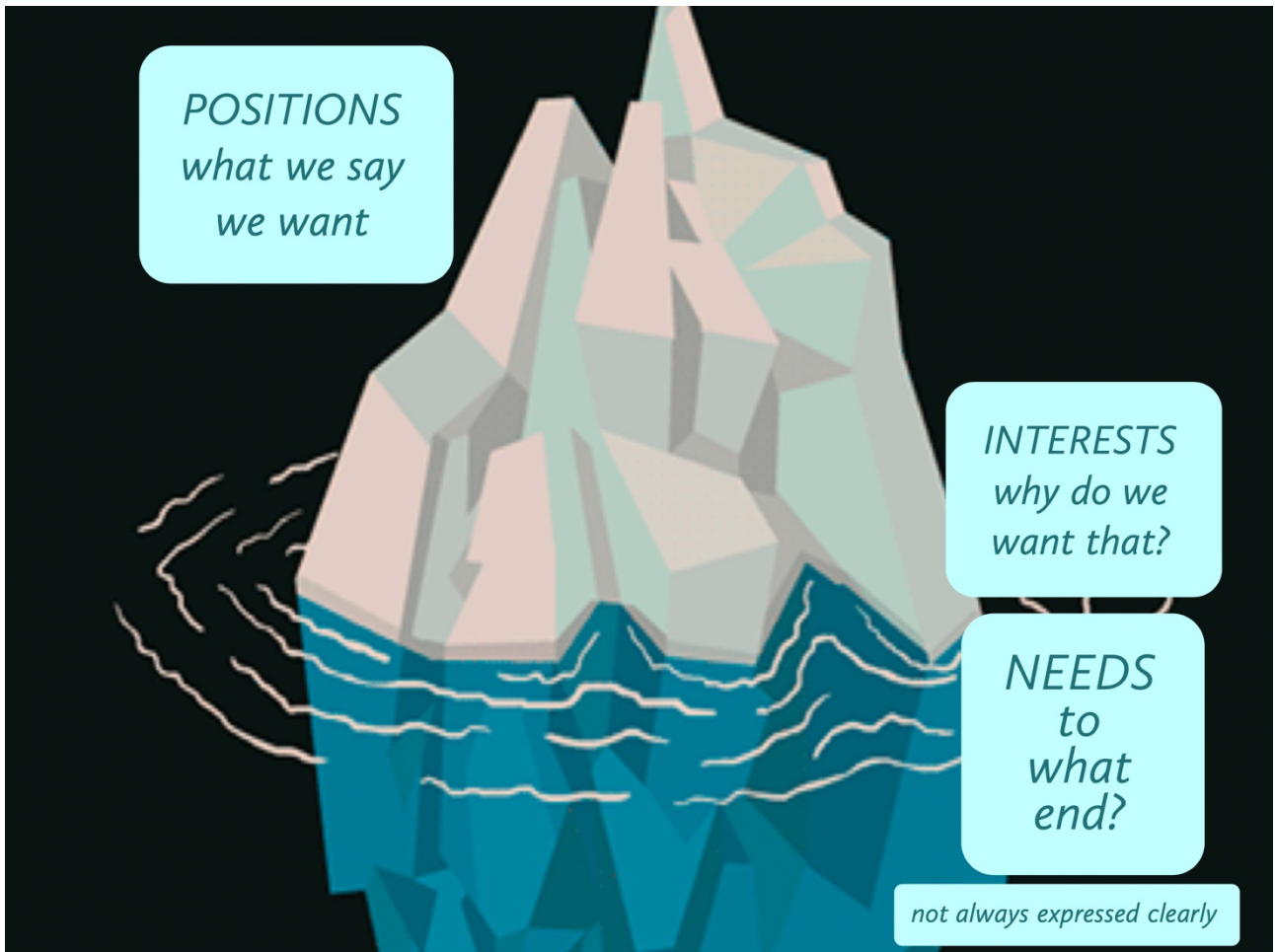
A conflict is an **interactive process** set in a **specific context**. It is a **social construction**, a human creation which is not quite the same as violence, and which can be **positive or negative** depending on how it is embraced and concluded. It can be **guided, transformed and overcome** by the parties involved. It is usually the product of antagonism or incompatibility between two or more parties and it is expressed through **insatisfaction or disagreement** towards different things (Paul Lederach).

In our view on Community Mediation, conflict is not necessarily a feature in the case needing mediation. On the contrary... Ideally, we would have a process of recognition and prevention of potential conflicts.

Conflict: characteristics and implications

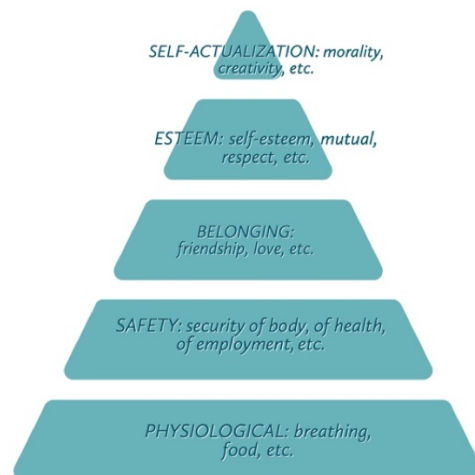
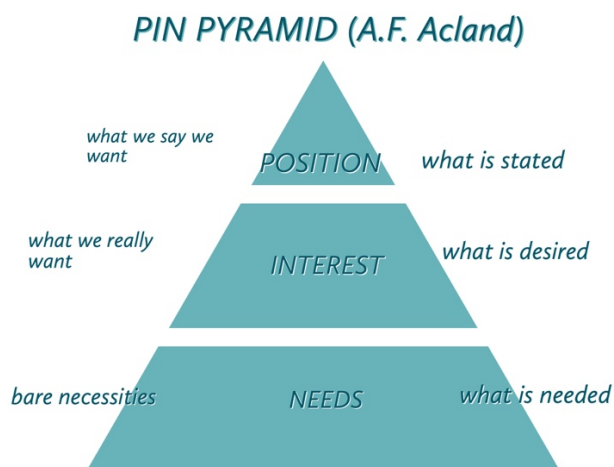
- It emerges when someone's wishes or interests are not the same as someone else's, and s/he opposes them.
- Confusion follows: we struggle to understand why we are experiencing discomfort.
- Fear and anguish arise. Deep feelings, conjuring the ideas of parting, separation, death.
- Contact with disorder: a door opens on chaos.
- Painful experience for any human being: it threatens our reference points. We perceive them as blurred and unacknowledged.
- Our identity's structure falters: we react to get out of this situation.
- A phase of transition: from a former order (now disorder) to a new order.
- Chance of growth, of positive change.
- Yet, to get over a conflict we need to be able to understand it, to give it a place in our life, to give it a context, and to acknowledge it.
- We need to be given time and space to acknowledge and express our pain, and what the triggering experience was.





(Materials Graciela Frías Ojinaga)

PYRAMID OF NEEDS (A. H. MASLOW)



(Material Juan Carlos Vezzulla)

INTERESTS



*fears, wishes, concerns, hopes,
needs, underlying one's
positions*

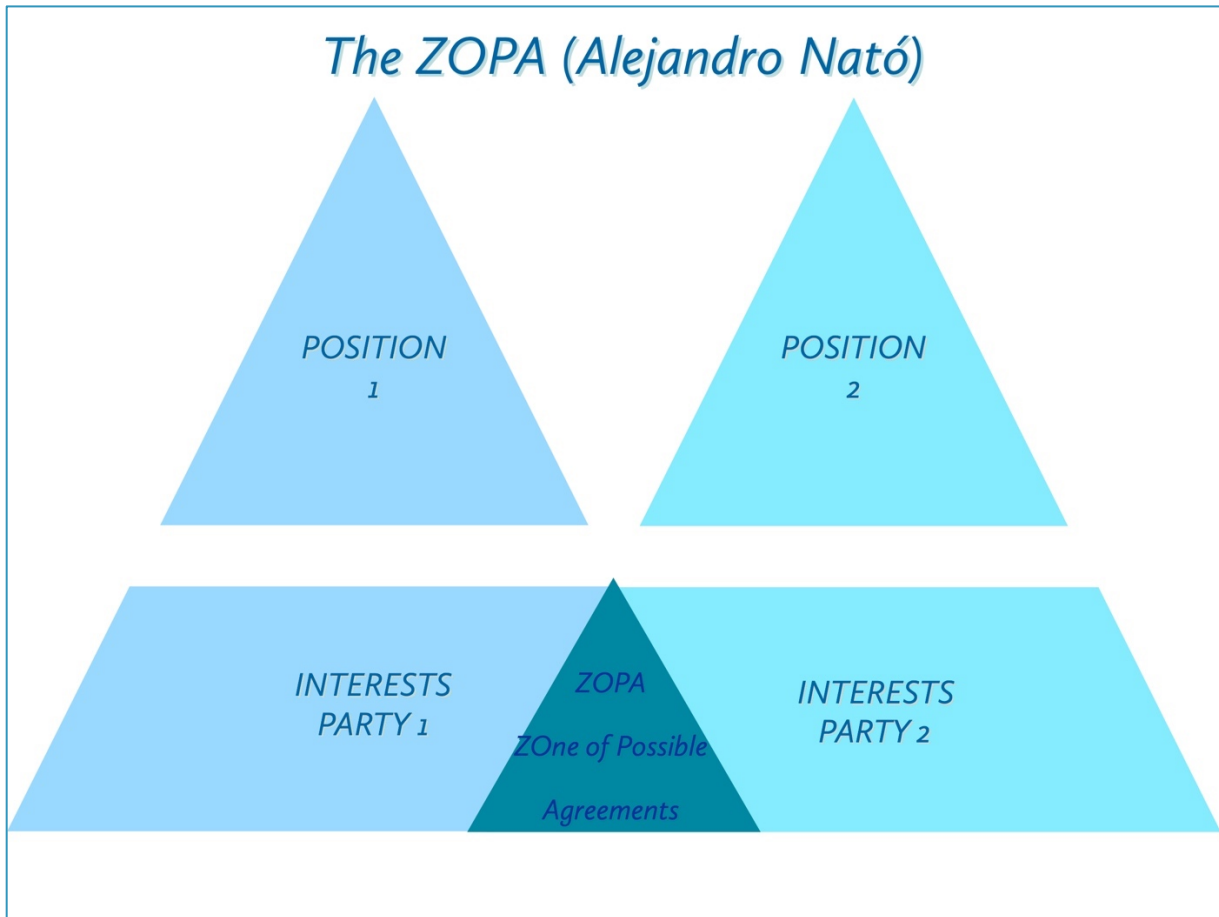
- *what are the interests of one party?*
- *what are the interests of the other?*
- *are there any common interests?*

*focusing in INTERESTS underlying
positions*

- *identify as many interests as possible*
- *look for connections with the parties' positions*
- *evaluate their impact on the conflict*

IDENTIFY:

- **COMMON** interests
- **OPPOSING** interests
- **DIFFERING** interests



An “elemental” matrix for conflict analysis

- Who is directly involved?
- Who is indirectly involved?
- Are there or could there be any allegiances or coalitions between people or groups? Between whom?
- Who could be the “Third”?
- What are the habits and uses of the actors involved in the conflict?
- When and how did the conflict arise?
- How did it evolve?
- What are the main events?
- What material or symbolic assets are at stake where actors are concerned? (For instance: water, land, values, power, participation, prestige, identity, recognition, wishes, etc.)
- What kind of power does each actor hold on the others?
- What kind of relationship exists? (equality-inequality; symmetry-asymmetry)
- Do one or more parties hold enough power to force their decisions on others?
- What would you propose to manage the conflict?

Third area: tools and techniques for Community Mediation

Some essential prerequisites on Communication and Pragmatics

Training courses on Mediation usually touch on the relevance of the communicative dimension, although in quite a broad and simplistic way. That is the reason why we prefer to focus, in synthesis, on the importance for mediators to know how to properly code and decode all pragmatic components.

What does “pragmatic” mean? It means we are referring to Pragmatics, a branch of Linguistics. In this sense, Pragmatics focusses on the interpretation of utterances in real contexts; it studies how the utterance “It’s hot” can be open to several interpretations, depending on the context (“Could you open the window, please?”, or “I don’t feel like having soup”, or, again, a way to avoid silence while in a lift) (Training material, F. Raga Gimeno, 2016).

From this viewpoint, communication succeeds when, after having suitably decoded what has been uttered explicitly, we merge it with contextual information, moving from “what words mean” to “what speakers mean”. Mediation means observing, analysing, and interpreting these exchanges (face-to-face or from different locations), focussing on the “material” brought by the actors and the parties involved, as they code, interpret and understand it.

The main communication issues (and resulting conflicts) we experience on a day-to-day basis, even with people with whom we share the same language and culture, are indeed of a pragmatic kind: they are due to the fact that the speaker and the addressee of an utterance do not (or did not) have the same, necessary, contextual information, purposes, and communicative goals. In these cases, it is not incomprehensions (such as when people do not speak the same language) which arise, but misunderstandings.

The same can be said of intercultural communication issues; indeed (and as a wide array of essays by some authors have shown), we believe that everyone carries within themselves their own culture, and that all communication is, in part, intercultural; we also believe that a communicative exchange between two people coming from the same country, but holding quite different status, social role, age and origin can give rise to more misunderstandings than when two people meet who come from very different countries and have a lower degree of asymmetry in status, social role and age.

During communication, pragmatic elements convey interpersonal information through the “Communicative Interaction Models”, to follow the notion proposed by Raga Gimeno. CIMs are expressed via the physical dimension of communication and through verbal politeness.

We can identify three kinds of CIMs

- Spatial distribution (non-verbal language);
- Time allocation (turns of talking, conversation structure, e.g. especially greetings/leaving expressions and ritual formulas in conversation);
- Paralanguage: language features which are not properly verbal, such as volume, pitch, speed rate, emphasis, etc.

Verbal politeness can also be divided into three main areas:

- Content (abounding/sparse information, detailed/vague information);
- Truthfulness (social untruths);
- Style (language can be more or less direct, addressing forms can be more or less formal)

Mediators and dialogue/communication facilitators should be aware of these aspects and keep them always in mind while working.

Other essential ingredients for Community Mediation and dialogue facilitation

First and foremost, we should explain what we mean by “dialogue”. This word may sound hollow if not explained. Here, dialogue means:

- Equal distribution among participants to the interaction: the aim is to increase participation (equality);
- Sensitivity for and towards participants (empathy);
- Promotion of plural perspectives as a form of empowerment (empowerment)

(C. Baraldi, “L’analisi della MNR”, “An analysis of the MNR technique- Methodology of Narration and Reflection”, training material)

In this sense, the fundamental traits all mediators should strive to acquire are: listening skills, interpreting skills of linguistic and cultural factors, mirroring techniques (echoing, reformulating, paraphrasing, etc.) reproducing the other’s speech, and constant global observations. All these traits should be used adjusting different techniques, tools and skills during one’s in-progress intervention.

Listening means:

LISTENING

- verbal
- non-verbal
- paraverbal
- context
- reality

ACTIVE LISTENING

- no biased thinking
- no association with other cases
- no conclusions
- no a priori opinions
- no anticipations
- respecting: the “when” and “how”
- pay attention: what is being said – what we mean to say – how we say that

(Material Juan Carlos Vezzulla)

In order to achieve all of the above and to promote empathy, participation and resilience, mediators need to be deeply aware of the importance of interpersonal relationships. That means being able to understand oneself.

- Our innermost feelings and thoughts are part of it;
- A deeper awareness means a stronger link between our inner world and the outer experience;
- Some resources are here at play: motivation, decision-making skills, individual ethics, integrity, empathy, and altruism.

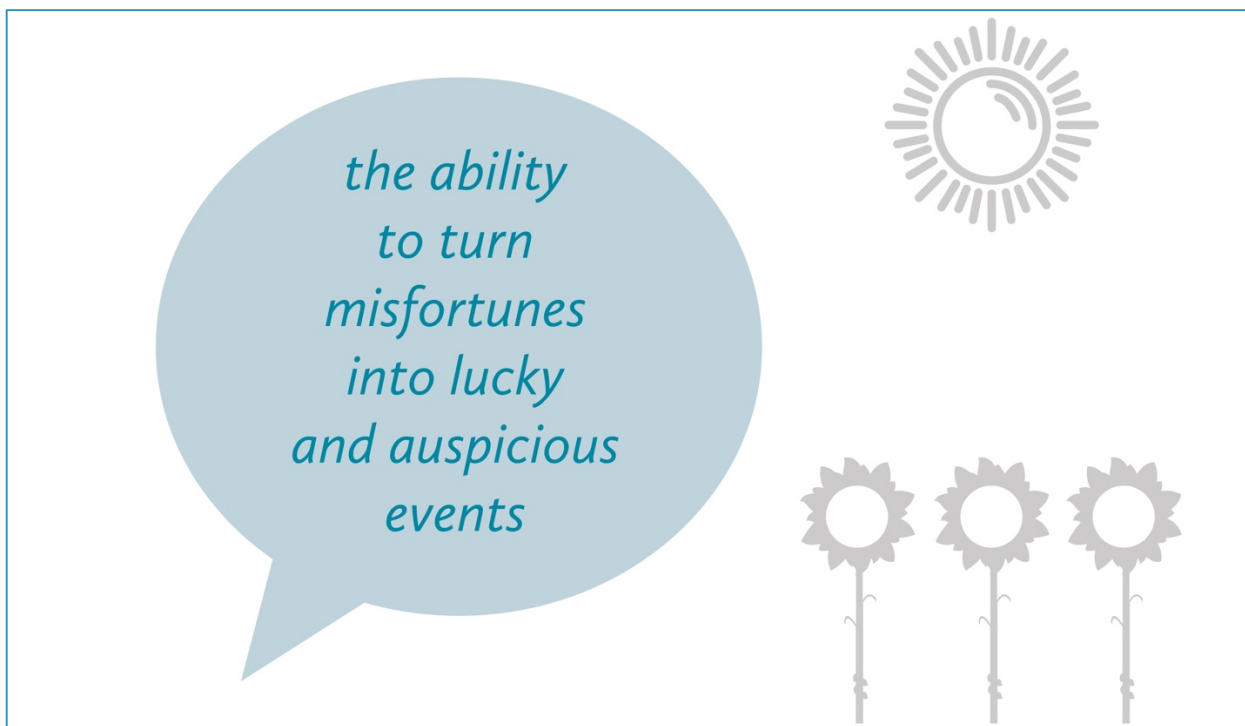
Empathy and resilience: two necessary features in our path towards Community Mediation.

Empathy

The word “empathy” is derived from the Greek *en* and *patheo*, meaning “inside” and “to feel”. Empathy, then, means the psyche’s attitude to feel within oneself the emotions, feelings, and intentions which inhabit the psyche of the people we meet. Self-awareness is the starting point for developing empathy: the more we are open to our own emotions, the more we will be able to interpret our and others’ feelings. Empathy is, like resilience, extremely important not only for the participants and all the parties in the process, but also for the professionals involved (mediators, facilitators, trainers, etc.).

Resilience

Resilience is the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness (<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/resilience>).



(Materials Graciela Frías Ojinaga)

It is important to bear in mind that mediation, before being a technique, is first and foremost a lifestyle aiming at active participation from everyone (J. Pesqueira Leal, 2005); here, we draw a short list of tools and techniques which can guide mediators and facilitators in their work.

Appreciative thinking and dialogue: a paradigm of positive transformation you bring about when you appreciate and nurture within yourself the best in life. It is the art - as well as a technique - of shaping your questions in a way that strengthens a system's capacity to foresee, grasp, and use positive elements within itself. Appreciative inquiry is promoted by Dr. David Cooperrider and other trainers (<http://www.davidcooperrider.com/>).

- A methodology based on shared vision, a new way to look at reality.
- Result- and consensus-oriented.
- It starts with the appreciation of what the system already is and has.

It makes use of several techniques, such as questions, paraphrasing, reformulating (more details in the passages below).

Paraphrasing helps to:

- Allow the recipient to listen and understand the original message in a positive way, thus allowing communication to flow more easily.
- Allow people to make decisions and find solutions more easily.
- Encourage lower degrees of aggressivity and polarisation.
- Highlight the parties' interests and needs.
- Reveal implicit content, often hidden by the emotions.

Reformulating

Reformulating consists of finding another way of narrating any event told by one of the mediated parties.

In this way, you make it easier for the parties to look at the events through another "set of lenses", and to analyse them from another point of view. You work to overcome emotions, to allow people to expand their field of vision by approaching new versions of the same reality. You can reformulate by using metaphors or synonyms which are appropriate to the system of beliefs and the characteristics of the parties involved.

Requesting clarifications

You use an interrogative contribution to try and elicit a clarification of the information provided by the parties, thus making it easier to:

- Understand what has been said.
- Put an end to mistaken hypothesis or interpretations made by the parties or the mediator him/herself.

The aim is clarifying, defining, and highlighting any possible source of doubts.

Other tools which can be used:

- **Questions** (open and closed questions to confirm, expand, and ascertain information; “the million-dollar question”), to explore expectations and horizons, room of manoeuvre, to get into detail, monitor understanding, confirm or disprove goals and perspectives. They help to create options.
- **Echoing effect**: repeating something to create a mirroring effect.
- **Minimal signals**: “mh, mh” “eh, eh”, etc.. to support turns or before the closing of a moment of reflection. It helps to express you are encouraging, understanding, and listening to the party.
- **Mechanisms and processes of synthesis**: to sum things up and check if the interlocutors agree on it.

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Useful websites

Congresos Mundiales de Mediación, <http://www.congresodemediacion.com/>

Fundación Mediadores en Red, <https://www.mediadoresenred.org.ar/>

Instituto Mediación y Gestión de Conflictos, <https://www.ucm.es/imedia>

Instituto Universitario de Investigación sobre Migraciones, Etnicidad y Desarrollo Social, <http://www.uam.es/otroscentros/imesdes/>

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