

REPORT ON ACTION EVALUATION OF THE STARA ZAGORA MULTI-ETHNIC COMMISSION, BULGARIA

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INTRODUCTION

From 1997 to 1998, the authors of this report served as Action Evaluators for an ethnic relations project in Bulgaria. This project was part of a program that involves the creation of multi-ethnic "Commissions" in several Bulgarian towns. We applied Action Evaluation to the Commission in the town of Stara Zagora. The evaluation process began just as the Commission was forming. About a year later, the Commission had some activities underway and had begun to function effectively, making the timing suitable to assess evolved goals and plans.

This paper recounts the application of Action Evaluation to the Stara Zagora Multi-Ethnic Commission. The Action Evaluation process has helped clarify the Commission's goals and captured the evolution of those goals as the group has gelled. At the time of the Baseline stage, there were significant contrasts among the goals of the different stakeholder groups, but now, the Commission has a clear, agreed-on mission, a set of goals, and a set of planned activities designed to meet those goals. These goals and plans can serve as the basis for a future assessment of the Commission's success.

The work of CDR Associates and the Open Education Centre in Bulgaria

CDR Associates partners Susan Wildau and Bernie Mayer have been working in Bulgaria for several years on a large program which aims to apply conflict resolution principles and techniques to build cross-cultural cooperation between the ethnically-Bulgarian majority and several minority groups, including the Roma (Gypsies) and Turks. Funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts, the project was originally conceived as involving training in mediation, facilitation, and dispute resolution systems design. It evolved substantially through CDR's partnership with the Sophia-based Foundation on Negotiation and Conflict Resolution, which is affiliated with the Open Education Centre, led by Rumens Valchev.

The project resulted in the development of a set of multi-ethnic Commissions in each of several Bulgarian towns, coordinated by the Open Education Centre. The Commissions work to solve local community problems, especially those affecting minority groups or inter-ethnic relations. This requires collaboration and cooperative decision-making both among Commission members and between each Commission and the surrounding community. Since the Commissions themselves are formed of members of different ethnic groups, they foster inter-ethnic cooperation. The Commissions, as they have formed, have officially registered as NGOs (non-governmental organizations), and each is free to set its own activities and priorities, within the broad framework of the overall project. CDR provided initial impetus for the project, conducted training in collaborative problem solving and facilitation, and has consulted to the project throughout. CDR's role has diminished substantially now

that the project is running smoothly. New Commissions are still forming, and one of the most recent ones to form is in the town of Stara Zagora.

Entry and start-up

The decision to apply Action Evaluation to this project emerged over a series of visits and conversations among Jay Rothman (originator of Action Evaluation), CDR Associates, and the Open Education Centre. During Dr. Rothman's visit CDR Associates in early 1997, he invited me to become an Action Evaluator, due to the nature of my position, which included research.

CDR Associates has numerous conflict-resolution projects that could be evaluated. The Bulgaria project was selected because it clearly has identity-based elements (a focus of Dr. Rothman's practice and writing) and also because it is in Eastern Europe (a focus of Action Evaluation's original sponsor, the Pew Charitable Trusts). It has also been a significant, long-term project for CDR.

Because of the barriers of language, distance, and time zone, two additional Action Evaluators were designated in Bulgaria. Virginia Valova and Tanya Demirova, both personnel of the Open Education Centre, were charged (via discussions with Rumen Valchev, director of the Centre) with conducting the interviews, having them translated, and other tasks more easily performed by Bulgarians. My role has included facilitating the process and guiding the Bulgarian evaluators, entering the interview data in the AE database, analyzing the data, and writing reports.

Ms. Valova and Ms. Demirova traveled to the National Conference on Peacemaking and Conflict Resolution in March 1997 in order to acquaint themselves with the process and with myself as fellow Evaluator. There, Dr. Rothman held two meetings of the Action Evaluators, and the group conducted a conference panel on the AE model. Together, the two Bulgarian Evaluators and I selected the Stara Zagora Commission as the one to evaluate. This Commission was just forming, allowing us to employ the full AE method from the beginning. I was charged with interviewing Susan Wildau and Bernard Mayer, the CDRA associates personnel working on the Bulgaria project.

STAGE I: BASELINE

The pure Action Evaluation method has four stages.

- 1 In the Baseline stage, goals, motivations, and means ("what," "why," and "how") are interactively assessed for individuals, "stakeholder" groups, and for the project as a whole.
- 2 In the Agreement-on-Design stage, the Action Evaluators facilitate a discussion for the stakeholder groups (especially conveners and participants) to reach agreement on goals ("what") and means ("how"). The project is then allowed time to proceed and develop.
- 3 At some point roughly halfway through the estimated life span of the project, the Formative stage is conducted. This is essentially a repeat of the Baseline stage, intended to capture the evolution of the goals and means as the project matures, unexpected challenges are grappled with, and methods are adjusted. Based on the results of the Formative stage, evaluators help the project formulate evolved criteria for success; specific, concrete, measurable aims against which success can be measured.
- 4 Finally, the Summative stage is, in effect, traditional evaluation. Any evaluator, either the original Action Evaluator or others inside or outside the project, can now collect data on the project's activities and results and

compare them against the evolved criteria for success in order to rate the project's success or failure.

For the Stara Zagora Commission, we applied the Baseline stage and a blend of the Agreement-on-Design and Formative stages.

Method and deviations from the pure Action Evaluation model

For the Bulgaria project, we have used four stakeholder groups:

- 1 "Sponsors", Ms. Wildau and Dr. Mayer.
- 2 "Supervisors", Mr. Valchev, and three other staff of the Open Education Centre in Sofia. They oversee the entire Commission program.
- 3 "Conveners", a group of Bulgarians associated with the Open Education Centre, each assigned to guide and assist one or more of the Commissions. The conveners come from a variety of professions and ethnic groups. Although only two conveners are assigned to the Stara Zagora Commission, all nine conveners were interviewed for the Baseline stage.
- 4 "Participants", the 14 people who joined the Stara Zagora Commission. Like the conveners, the participants come from a variety of professions and ethnic groups. Many were involved in small NGOs before joining the Commission, and most have been generally active in the community.

I interviewed Wildau and Mayer. Ms. Valova and Ms. Demirova interviewed the other three groups. The interviews with the sponsors were quite in-depth, about 45 minutes each. Due to the large number of interviewees, and other circumstances (for example, the participants were interviewed during a conference), the Bulgarian interviews were relatively short. In addition, there was nothing that explicitly instructed the Bulgarian evaluators to ask the "why" (motivations) question *after* the "what" (goals) question. The Bulgarian Evaluators used "why" as an ice-breaker question, "Why did you decide to get involved in this project?", rather than using it to probe the motivations behind the stated goals. (Later versions of the written questionnaire make the importance of the sequence clearer.) Therefore, the motivations data for the Bulgarian interviewees are unfortunately not very rich.

Being in the same office as the two sponsors, I was easily able to provide them with feedback of their interviews, in the form of summaries of their points and analysis of the similarities and differences between the two individuals, as the AE method prescribes. However, it was not practical for the Bulgarian evaluators to do this. They had to get the interview transcripts translated and send them to me, and I had to enter and analyze the data, before there was anything meaningful to return. Ms. Valova said she thought the analysis was accurate, but the stakeholder groups in Bulgaria did not have a chance to review the analysis until a later stage. For similar reasons, there was no opportunity during the Baseline stage for the Bulgarian stakeholder groups to hold within-group discussions of their similar, unique, and contrasting responses.

Analysis of interview data by group

The most striking result of the comparisons within and between the four stakeholder groups in the Stara Zagora Multi-Ethnic Commission is the differences among the four groups about the overall conceptualization and purpose of the project. However, this report will start with the micro level (within-group analysis) before proceeding to the macro level. Mostly, goals ("what") and means to achieving goals ("how") will be addressed.

Participants

What: The people recruited to be members of the Stara Zagora Commission shared a number of goals, most

revolving around helping minorities and the poor in various ways (to find jobs, improve their education, cultivate their young people), and overcoming discrimination against and isolation of minorities. Two were looking for greater government support of NGOs, perhaps NGOs who could advance these other goals. With some of the goals, such as "help people find jobs," it was unclear whether the word "people" referred to the Roma, minorities in general, or the underprivileged in general. A majority of the stated motivations concerned the plight of the Roma, and roughly half of the participants were Roma.

It was unclear from the interviews to what extent the various goals might conflict with each other. There were a number of specific problems participants wanted to tackle, such as reducing child begging and prostitution, promoting health education, preventing juvenile crime, involving youth in community service, and helping people find jobs. Possibly, all participants would be satisfied as long as the general thrust of improving the lot of minorities was maintained; but it was also possible that some participants were wedded to very specific goals.

At least a few participants seem to be focused on helping one ethnic group exclusively. For example, one participant expressed interest in drawing new members to the Roma NGOs, while another made reopening of the mosque a key goal. This clearly could create tension.

Only a couple of participants had goals directly concerning *interethnic* relations, with a view towards the well being of Bulgarian society as a whole. One example was a goal to "unite and save Bulgaria." Most others were concerned solely with the well being of the underdog groups.

How: In terms of *how* participants foresaw reaching their goals, there was wide agreement that establishing the Commission, drawing on the varied expertise of its members, and collaborating with other NGOs and with local government officials were all important.

With the "how" question, like the "what" question, it was difficult to assess the degree of potential conflict in the responses. Many participants listed specific projects that others may not support, such as establishing a Roma Culture Center, or developing a program to help children stay in school. It was unclear to what extent these participants would be displeased if their "pet projects" were not implemented. In addition, some participants emphasized direct charity, such as "find money and donations for the poor," while others seemed focused on collaboration and persuasion to achieve their goals. These different methods could certainly be compatible, but could also be at odds if some believed in one method to the exclusion of others.

Summary: In summary, the participant group shared goals of helping the underprivileged in Bulgaria, especially minorities. They were motivated by the need to alleviate problems of the Roma and other minorities, including poverty and discrimination. They saw the Commission as a good mechanism for dealing with these problems, and foresaw collaboration among Commission members and between the Commission and other groups and officials. There seemed to be numerous individual agendas that might harmonize nicely with each other or might compete for the Commission's limited resources.

One implicit but unmistakable theme in the participant responses was a sense of optimism, a belief that private individuals, by banding together and working hard, could begin to solve society's deepest problems. According to the sponsors Susan Wildau and Bernie Mayer, this was the most significant achievement of their collaboration with the Open Education Centre. They and other Westerners have commented that years under Communist authoritarian rule in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc created a sense that only those at the highest levels of authority could effect change.

Conveners

What: Like the participants, many of the conveners expressed goals to help needy minorities (improve literacy, raise employment, and so on). More than the participant group, however, the convener group also stated goals related to improving *interethnic* relations: increasing tolerance and understanding, resolving intercultural conflicts, integrating minorities into the broader society, and making the Commission a model for interethnic cooperation. These two distinct strands, uplifting of downtrodden minority members and enhancing intergroup relations, seem to be of roughly equal strength in the convener group.

A striking contrast emerged in conveners' goals: one expressed a desire to connect minorities with "Christian values, affirmed by Bulgarian people through the ages." This seemed sure to displease minority Commission members, and directly contrasted with such goals as "finding what is important to the minorities."

How: The conveners described numerous steps or projects the Commission could carry out to achieve these goals. Interestingly, several mentioned hard work, persistence or patience as a means to reach their goals. This may seem obvious, yet it could be significant in light of the transition from communism and what may be a newfound expectation that one's individual efforts can lead to societal change.

Other activities mentioned by several conveners included getting training, holding seminars, and improving their own and others' knowledge of intercultural relations. Some also mentioned building ties to others in the community, including NGOs, government, leaders of minority communities, and so on. Others mentioned spreading the word about the project or attracting more participants.

As with the participants' responses to the "how" question, it is difficult to tell how much the various conveners' desired steps may harmonize or conflict with each other. One contrast in methods to achieving goals is that some conveners focused on institution building, while others focused on outward activities. Institution building includes steps such as registering the Commission as an NGO, setting up the office, using the mass media to publicize the Commission, and earning public confidence. By contrast, outward activities included hosting a cultural "evening of understanding," consulting to the public on social and labor concerns, and working with at-risk children. Another contrast was between an inclination to rely on experts and specialists, versus a desire to develop as a grass-roots organization. Neither of these contrasts is necessarily conflict producing, as long as the conveners working with a specific Commission can reach agreement among themselves and with participants about the relative priority and importance of these differing approaches.

Summary: In summary, there are two foci among the conveners' goals: providing direct help to poor minorities through charitable projects, and improving interethnic relations. As a group they have a wide array of ideas as to how to implement these goals, some concerning institution building and others involving activities that reach out to the broader community. Their challenge will be to channel their optimism, enthusiasm, and sense of the possibilities into manageable plans, rather than trying to do everything at once.

Supervisors

What: The supervisor group showed a somewhat more idealistic conception of the nature and potential of the Commission project. Their shared goals included enhancing intercultural understanding and establishing effective models for doing so. Other goals along similar lines included working towards equal rights for all groups, uniting all participants around common aims, and working on intercultural conflict resolution. The supervisors also seemed intent on enhancing their own experience and knowledge, stating goals such as learning more about the cultures of

Bulgaria's minorities, enriching personal experience in conflict resolution and intercultural understanding, and becoming a better trainer.

While some of the supervisors' responses focused on personal growth and learning, for example, improving conflict resolution and project organizing skills, others explicitly mentioned changing other people. For example, one hoped to "change people's opinions, attitudes, and behavior towards other ethnic groups or minorities," and another intended to "train groups of social activists of a minority origin to work on the same problems." This difference in emphasis, between developing oneself and changing others, might or might not be problematic. As with contrasting goals in other groups, they can be blended if there is some agreement on priorities and relative emphasis of the different approaches.

How: In discussing the actions and means for achieving their goals, the supervisors had numerous different responses. Three of the four mentioned communicating with various people from different institutions and cultures, and informing the public of their work. Other shared goals included conducting seminars that bring together different ethnic groups, creating additional Commissions, creating Consulting Centers, providing support and supervision, and continuing to build the existing Commissions.

The only clear contrast among the supervisors' responses to the "how" question was that Rumen Valchev, the founder of the entire endeavor, seemed focused on the national level and the work of the program as a whole, whereas the other supervisors seem more particularly focused on certain Commissions. This is probably as it was intended to be.

Summary: In summary, the supervisors shared goals of creating intercultural understanding and resolving conflict, using the Commission structure and activities as a mechanism. They were aware that they were establishing a new model for improving intercultural relations and wanted to test and refine that model. They also were interested in personal and professional growth in these areas. Their main difference in emphasis was between growth and learning on the one hand, and changing other people on the other hand.

Sponsors

What: The two sponsors, as Western outsiders, saw this project as part of Bulgaria's transition to democracy. In addition, as conflict resolution practitioners, they conceived it as a way of addressing ethnic conflict. Their shared goals included creating a culture of democracy and dialogue, establishing a forum to bring people together to address problems, raising consciousness about the possibility of handling interethnic problems through dialogue, and preventing or resolving conflict.

There were also some subtle differences between their goals. One gave more emphasis to individual change, such as instilling an individual sense of empowerment and bringing about attitudes of tolerance. The other sponsor's emphasis was more on the group or community level, with goals such as promoting dialogue. In addition, one of the sponsors viewed the project as an example of systems change, where the other saw it as an experience in learning to help without hurting when working across boundaries. The latter implies somewhat more trepidation in attempting to change others.

How: The two sponsors agreed on most of the steps the Commission would need to take: connecting with key people in various ethnic groups, finding a uniting vision, getting training in inter-cultural communication and other skills, getting established as an NGO, and finding good issues to tackle. They had one contrasting set of means: one sponsor expressed the importance of taking on challenging projects, while the other emphasized the need to get an initial success, which could mean working with a less-challenging issue at least initially.

Summary: In summary, both sponsors saw the Commission as a forum for building capacity in Bulgaria to address problems, including interethnic ones, through dialogue, and to increase interethnic tolerance and understanding. They saw whatever specific activities the Commission might take on as ways to build that capacity.

Analysis of interview data: Inter-group comparison

What: The four groups fell along a spectrum in terms of their goals for the Stara Zagora Commission. The participants, at one end of the spectrum, seemed most concerned with helping minorities through charitable work: helping them find jobs, improving education and health care. (The conveners shared these goals but also held others.) The sponsors, at the other end of the spectrum, saw the project as part of building a culture of dialogue and democracy. This spectrum of goals could also be seen as going from tangible, results-oriented goals (relieving the problems of the poor) to more intangible, esoteric goals (instilling a culture of dialogue).

There were a number of goals in between that were shared by two or more groups. The sponsors and supervisors shared the goal of creating forums, structures, or models for local problem solving and intercultural understanding. The sponsors, supervisors, and conveners shared goals of enhancing intercultural understanding and helping to prevent or resolve ethnic conflict in Bulgaria. The conveners and participants shared goals of reducing discrimination against minorities, enhancing public perception of minorities, and promoting tolerance. However, when the two ends of the spectrum are compared, from promoting democratic dialogue and enhancing interethnic relations to providing direct aid to poor minorities, the contrast is considerable.

How: There were numerous shared responses to the "how" question across groups. All four groups wanted to institutionalize and strengthen the Commission. The sponsors, supervisors, and conveners wanted to bring people of various ethnic groups into contact, and wanted to hold seminars both to build skills and to bring people together. The supervisors and conveners wanted to publicize and spread the ideas and activities of the project. The supervisors, conveners, and participants wanted to collaborate with other NGOs, local government and other institutions. The conveners and participants wanted to help children in a variety of ways (such as helping them stay in school), and use experts inside or outside the Commission to achieve their goals.

The participants and conveners did not articulate the need to find a uniting vision (as the sponsors did), but the need was clear. At the end of the Baseline stage, the supervisors, conveners, and participants needed to integrate their visions and goals for the Commission and reach agreement on a series of activities.

STAGE II: AGREEMENT ON DESIGN AND FORMATIVE STAGE

Interim period: The Commission's development

Between summer 1997, when the interviews were conducted for the Baseline stage, and spring 1998, when the Agreement-on-Design/ Formative stage was conducted, the Commission experienced dramatic turnover of participants, with only four of the 20 original members remaining. Those who remain are the most committed to working in concert with the Commission as a whole. It appears the rest had expected they could achieve personal gain or could advance the work of specific projects in which they were already involved. When they learned this was not the case, they dropped their membership.

In the first several months of 1998, the participants started to meet more regularly and function more systematically. With the help of the conveners, they began activities aimed at improving the acceptance and integration of minorities. The first activity was a celebration of World Roma Day (April 8), a downtown festival introducing Roma customs and traditions. In collaboration with other organizations, Commission members participated in and encouraged others to join in the celebration. This event also launched the Commission as a visible, active community organization. The second event involved encouraging various ethnic groups to participate in the Muslim holiday of Bairyam.

The Commission has also developed internally. The members have formed sub-committees on health care, education, social work, employment, and violence prevention. Thus, each member is working in the area in which he or she has most personal interest and can be most effective.

In summary, in the period between the Baseline interviews and the subsequent stages of Action Evaluation, the Commission has become more organized and active in addressing the problems of their community. The Commission is now poised for greater accomplishments.

Method: Conducting a hybrid Agreement-on-Design/Formative stage

In the pure Action Evaluation process, the Agreement-on-Design phase occurs just after the Baseline phase. Using the results of the Baseline stage, stakeholders negotiate shared goals ("what") and methods("how").

In this case, a considerable amount of time passed between the Baseline stage interviews and the next stage. This was because a variety of logistical reasons and delays meant it took months to input, analyze, and report on the Baseline stage. The Agreement-on-Design phase could therefore not take place in the immediate wake of the Baseline interviews.

Instead, we combined the Agreement-on-Design and Formative stages. Ms. Valova facilitated a meeting on May 8, 1998 of Commission participants and conveners. She asked everyone present, first the participants as a group, then the conveners as a pair, to discuss their goals for the Commission and the activities they would like to undertake to achieve those goals. She also asked the participants to react to the conveners' responses, and also to the written summary of the sponsors' and supervisors' responses from the Baseline stage, and to discuss areas of agreement and disagreement.

In effect, this method elicited evolved, agreed-upon goals and methods, a blend of the purposes of the Agreement-on-Design and Formative stages. The disadvantage was that it lacked the detail of the Baseline stage. There was no individual data to analyze for within-group similarities and differences. In addition, the sponsors and supervisors were not included in the process.

Only the two conveners assigned to the Stara Zagora Commission participated in this meeting (whereas all the conveners were interviewed in the Baseline stage). The conveners are Petya Arnaudova, Head of the Stara Zagora Municipal Department of Education, and Apostol Karamitev, a Roma from the previous Commission's membership. The nine participants who attended are the most active Commission members.

As in the Baseline stage, the "what" and "how" data are much more rich than the "why" data. (The "why" question tended to elicit additional goals, or sometimes overarching goals.) Hence, the results below concentrate on the "what" and "how" data.

The meeting resulted in a large degree of agreement on goals and means, at least between the participants and conveners. The results are detailed below.

Results of group discussion

Participants

What: The participants expressed general agreement with the goals of participants in the Baseline stage. However, they more clearly formulated an overarching goal as follows: *Bulgarians should know that Roma people are a part of Bulgaria*. Other goals included helping the poor realize their potential, helping minority youth find jobs and become better socially integrated, and convincing families that it is important for their children to go to school. (In regards to the latter point, minority members have tended to place more emphasis on work than on education, due to a number of social pressures.)

How: The participants have identified a diverse but limited set of activities they would like to undertake to meet the above goals. First, they intend to bring back the old Roma crafts, such as brush making, smithing, tailoring, and basket making. They also plan to catalogue children not attending school, and work on drug prevention in schools. Finally, as organizational steps internal to the Commission, members plan to continue meeting as a group, and to sustain the subcommittees on education, social work, employment, and violence prevention.

Evolution from Baseline stage: The participants' favored goals and means have not changed substantially since the Baseline stage interviews. However, they have evolved in several ways. First, there is an agreed-upon, overarching goal (highlighted above), which can be restated as promoting acceptance and integration of the Roma people in Bulgarian society. This serves, in effect, as a mission statement.

Second, the remaining goals support this overarching goal. They reflect the participants' views of what are the most important goals with respect to achieving Roma acceptance and integration, alleviating the problems of poverty, unemployment, social exclusion, and lack of education.

Third, the activities planned are more focused: they are fewer (there was a long list of activities the participants hoped to accomplish at the Baseline time), and the activities support the goals. The revival of Roma crafts can aid in integrating Roma people into Bulgarian society; cataloguing truant students can help aid in addressing the lack of education; and preventing drug use in schools can help both in promoting education and preventing violence.

Conveners

What: The conveners' goals remain essentially unchanged from the Baseline stage, but they cohere more tightly around a common theme. The goals include improving interethnic relations and communication, improving the social status of minorities, integrating the Roma and other minorities into Bulgarian society, improving the education level of minorities, enhancing public knowledge of minority cultures, and developing civil society. These are all consistent with the overarching goal stated by participants that Bulgarians should know the Roma are part of Bulgarian society (though the Conveners more consistently refer to "minorities" broadly, not just to the Roma).

How: The two conveners at this Stara Zagora meeting felt that the methods of achieving these goals stated by the larger group of conveners during the Baseline stage remained viable goals (holding seminars and trainings, having frequent contact with the other conveners, attracting motivated people to work on minority issues, joint training for members of different ethnic groups, cooperating with other NGOs working on similar problems, and involving

local government representatives).

Evolution from Baseline stage: The conveners' goals in this stage, compared to the Baseline stage, more clearly center around the same overarching goal the participants expressed: achieving greater integration and acceptance of minorities into Bulgarian society. There was not, however, any change in preferred means. The conveners did not select or narrow the activities into a manageable set of plans; rather, they presented an array of *possible* ways of reaching the Commission's goals.

Convergence of participants' and conveners' goals

The participants said that they absolutely agreed with the conveners' goals and preferred methods of achieving them. The participants were more selective about their preferred means, this is perhaps because they are the ones who will have to implement them. The conveners, by contrast, act as consultants to the Commission and need to have a broader array of possibilities in their tool kit. They also derive ideas from their interaction with the conveners of the other Commissions around the country.

The goals agreed upon by the participants and conveners are all consistent with the notion of promoting integration and acceptance of minorities in Bulgarian society. The conveners articulated a broader array of goals consistent with that theme, but again, this was probably due to their wider knowledge of the work of different Commissions and their knowledge of a wider array of possibilities. The May 8 meeting, along with the natural attrition of members whose goals lay more on the fringe, seems to have brought about this convergence of goals.

Participants' reactions to supervisors' and sponsors' Baseline data

While supervisors and sponsors did not participate in the May 8 meeting of the Stara Zagora Commission, the participants reviewed and reacted to the responses of these two groups in the Baseline data. They said they agreed with all the goals and preferred methods articulated by these two groups.

Conclusion: Convergence of vision

At the end of the Baseline section of this paper, we noted that the four stakeholder groups, participants, conveners, supervisors and sponsors, articulated goals that differed along a spectrum from practical, direct charity work for the underprivileged (expressed by participants) to such lofty goals as building a culture of democracy and dialogue (expressed by sponsors). The three groups that remain (now that the sponsors have essentially withdrawn from active involvement in this program) seem now to have compatible, if not identical, goals.

The overarching goal adopted by participants and conveners is for Bulgarians to accept minorities, primarily the Roma, as an integral part of Bulgaria. This goal is neither about charity nor about building a culture of dialogue and democracy, at least not explicitly. It lies somewhere between these two ends of the spectrum of Baseline goals. A subtler distinction in the Baseline data was between *advancement* of minority groups and building *intercultural* relations and conflict resolution. The former is more advocacy-oriented, the goal being to help the downtrodden, while the latter is more neutral, the goal being to improve society as a whole. The newly-articulated mission strikes a balance between these two approaches: the goal of integration and acceptance of minority groups is of course beneficial for minorities, but it also implies concern for the well-being of Bulgarian society as a whole. This convergence seems to have occurred through a combination of months of working together, and the facilitated meeting in May to discuss goals and activities.

The sponsors' goals were not reassessed during this stage of the evaluation, but assuming their goals have not changed, they remain somewhat different from those now agreed on by the participants and conveners. That is, the sponsors' goals fall more squarely into intercultural relations, and not into the realm of advocacy of minorities. It is not clear whether this difference will cause difficulty. The Commission structure does allow each Commission to establish its own goals and activities, and the Stara Zagora group's goals may be sufficiently congruent with those of the central supervisory personnel. It is also not unusual, in organizations of any kind, for the leadership to have a broader sense of the vision into which the more specific goals of the "implementers" fit.

As for the activities intended to reach the Commission's goals, the participants have set the direction for the foreseeable future. They have articulated a manageable number of projects (reviving Roma crafts, cataloguing truant children, and preventing drug use in schools) on which they will focus their efforts, and with which the conveners are pleased. A Summative evaluation would focus on the degree to which these projects have progressed after some defined period of time.

In summary, the Action Evaluation process helped the Commission establish a more focused set of goals and plans for the Stara Zagora Multi-Ethnic Commission. One of the purposes of Action Evaluation is to set projects up for success from the beginning. Indeed, in this instance, Action Evaluation seems to have helped pave the road to success, and to have broadly established ways in which future success can be measured.

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