

PrisonSMART Report - February 2005

We have already completed two prison courses with 40 people (20 people each course). We received permission to teach two courses per day, one course in the morning (20 people) and another course in the afternoon (20 people). So every week, we will have 40 people who will have taken the training by the end of the week.

The experiences of those who have taken the training are great and both international and local director of the prison is more than happy with the success of the programme. They have asked us to continue with courses and involve all the staff and prisoners in the prison who are interested to participate in our programme.

Yesterday, one woman came with tears of happiness to the local director of the prison and told him that her husband who works as correctional officer in the prison, has totally changed after taking the course. She said that they were about to divorce, but after the course, her husband is full of love and understanding and he does not want to divorce her.

All 40 people who have taken the course have had positive experiences (they are happier, more energetic, more caring ...) and find this course unique. They shared their good experiences with their colleagues and now their colleagues have hurried to sign up for the next courses. So we are continuing on Monday, 21st February with another 40 people (divided in two groups/courses).

Another good thing is that these two courses were multi-ethnic because we have had both Serbs and Albanians prison staff on the course. Their relationships have improved so much in the warm atmosphere that has been created during the course. They started to care for each others and support each others regardless of ethnic background.

We were also informed by the prison management that there were not only ethnic conflicts in the prison but also conflicts between so called "correctional-uniformed staff" and "civil staff" of the prison. There was not much understanding between these "two groups". The workshops have brought them together and helped them to drop the barriers and to see each other firstly as human beings.