

Human Rights Youth Club of Gjilan/Gnjilane Region

Name of organisation:

OSCE Regional Centre Gjilan/Gnjilane

Bregu i djegur P.N.

Gjilan/Gnjilane

Kosovo/UNMIK

Contact person: Claire Fernandez

Brief description: The Human Rights Youth Club is a multiethnic group of 30 young students who work together to develop activities related to human rights. Participants, who belong to Kosovo Albanian, Kosovo Serb and Roma communities from different locations in the Gjilan/Gnjilane Region, are involved in a “learning by doing” approach which empowers and encourages the youth to actively participate. With the support of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, the group has been working on its first project: A traveling photo exhibition on human rights situations from all over the world.

Audience intended for: secondary school students

Current geographical coverage: Kosovo/UNMIK (Gjilan/Gnjilane region)

Languages available in: English, Albanian, Serbian

Thematic areas: Tolerance, non-discrimination education

Type of approach: teaching and learning practice and tool

Background information on the context in which the material was produced: The group first met on the occasion of International Human Rights day (10 December 2008), for a one-day training on non-discrimination and equality. The workshop was attended by 24 secondary school students and 4 teachers from the three municipalities in the region. The municipal governments supported the initiative by providing transportation to and from the event for the students. The project was a great success thanks to the cooperation of OSCE, school directors, and municipal governments. The young participants were enthusiastic to learn more about human rights concepts. Importantly, both students and teachers expressed strong interest in building upon the one-day event and creating a regular forum in which students could strengthen their knowledge of and interest in human rights-related topics.

Toward this end, the OSCE and young participants began exploring the possibility of creating a Human Rights Youth Club. During a preliminary meeting organised at the OSCE premises, approximately 45 students and teachers from the region gathered to set the groundwork for establishing the Human Rights Club of Gjilan/Gnjilane Region. Students focused on the composition of the Club, rules of procedure and ideas for activities. The first activity envisaged was a photo exhibition on human rights situations around the world, which would serve as an effective awareness raising activity. Working groups were formed, and follow-up sessions were held in preparation for the exhibition, which took place throughout Gjilan/Gnjilane region.

Specifically, the young participants selected photographs for the exhibition, chose a title for the exhibition, designed a poster announcing the event, prepared invitations, and were involved in the translating and printing process as well as in the setting up of the exhibition in all locations.

Human and financial resources required to implement the practice, and its sustainability: The practice is more demanding in terms of human resources than financial resources. Approximately 10 OSCE staff members are working to support the Human Rights Club. Apart from coordination (participants come from different, often remote, locations), interpretation and translation are the most time consuming tasks. Communication between Albanian speaking and Serbian speaking youth is almost impossible without interpreters, as few can speak English. The budget to implement the practice is small, covering transport and materials for the activities.

The practice is only in its early stages, so it is as of yet difficult to assess its sustainability. Next steps will focus on capacity building of the Club (language trainings, human rights trainings, and project management trainings), in order to progressively withdraw OSCE's involvement.

How unique in addressing core themes of Compendium: The practice is unique in the sense that it puts human rights values into practice by the simple fact that youth from different communities are working together. Applied to the Kosovo case, where very often the social links are broken between the different communities, working on a common project is a way for young people to create these missing links. Emphasis is placed not on the outcome but on the process. Much effort is exerted by OSCE Field Teams to keep vulnerable groups and isolated non-majority communities involved, despite the political and economical context.

Critical factors related to the success of the practice: The success of the practice is linked to the status neutrality of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo. OSCE Field Teams are perceived as neutral and trusted by all communities.

Evidence of effectiveness: Strong interest and active participation of youth

Strengths of the practice: The practice is a success thanks to the cooperation of several actors from school directors to local authorities, but above all thanks to the great commitment from the students.

Weaknesses of the practice: The practice is still very dependant on OSCE support and efforts to keep all communities involved.

Necessary conditions for adapting to other contexts: Choose a neutral project management team which is able to reassure all parties. Involve local authorities, schools directors, and teachers.

Contact information and further information:

OSCE Mission in Kosovo
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