

## **Education for Social Justice: Adult Training Programme**

*Name of organisation:*  
**International Step by Step Association**

### **DESCRIPTION**

Dinchiyska, Koczor, Lampkin, Lee, Nemeckova, Repisky, Rona, Smith, Trikić, Vidmar, Vranjesević (2005).

The purpose of this training is to increase people's knowledge, understanding, and sensitivity to the mechanisms which perpetuate and maintain systems of discrimination and exclusion both explicit and implicit. This includes helping people understand how they themselves may participate in and collaborate with established social and institutional practices, both consciously and unconsciously, that keep some people in power and others excluded. It addresses the point that discrimination and oppression are very large issues that affect all of us and that we all need healing from participation in such practices.

The training promotes the concept that each person must intervene, challenge, and counter the personal and institutional behaviors that perpetuate these systems of exclusion. This includes the need to improve cross-cultural communication among the different groups; acquire knowledge on how to build alliances among groups to work against injustice and oppression; and acquire experience in addressing biases and injustices when they are encountered.

The program is conceptualized to work at the psychological, behavioral, educational, and action levels. One goes through three processes of understanding in the journey in order to liberate themselves and others from biased practices that create discrimination and oppression. :

**Naming** is the process of healing from and dealing with exclusion and oppression by putting language to the experience. It is important to understand that both target and non-target groups have been taught and told misinformation about others and themselves. In order to overcome past hurts there is a need to create an inclusive and equitable future. To do so, we must learn to process new meanings through affective understanding coupled with recognition of accurate cognitive information. We need clear and appropriate language in order to identify the real problems – to name reality in clear and concrete ways. Once reality is named, or exposed, we can move towards building critical consciousness and setting the stage for action.

**Voicing** is the notion that those who are traditionally silenced and/or disempowered begin to be actively involved through dialogue. Voice involves "speaking out" on issues, ideas, and feelings that affect our lives and listening to

what others say. Voice suggests having meaningful input, leading to a sense of ownership and empowerment. Through ownership and empowerment comes the ability to act and, ultimately, to influence the destiny of oneself and others. The process of gaining and using voice supports the development of critical consciousness.

**Building Allies** is accomplished when it is understood how diversity enriches a community and how people have often been divided from each other based on differences, whether these be economic, cultural, religious, or other observable or perceived characteristics. There needs to be a focus on the reality that we are all inherently eager to be allies to each other, to work towards eliminating oppression, and to stand up in the face of injustice. The process of building allies moves us through a process of reflection, dialog, silence, and eventually concrete action.

In the workshops participants:

- gain a deeper understanding of the forms of discrimination, exclusion, and oppression,
- develop their understanding of the role of 'naming' as a first step to dealing with injustices and to encourage them to begin voicing and building allies,
- develop their own voices and the voices of others to speak out on issues that affect them
- gain an increased understanding of stereotyping and develop the skills to deconstruct stereotypes,
- recognize different levels of responsibility in the perpetuation of systemic domination,
- recognize and apply strategies that assist in transforming their personal and institutional environments.

The types of activities done with participants in these workshops include:

#### ACTIVITIES AND THEORY CONNECTED WITH THE PROCESS OF NAMING

- Openness for change
- Affirming personal and group identity
- The anatomy of stereotypes and prejudices
- Understanding the importance of context and how boundaries and information frame thoughts that can lead to prejudice and stereotyping
- Bringing language into the experience
- Strategies for deconstructing stereotypical thinking
- Forms and manifestations of oppression (internalized oppression and dominance, implicit/explicit, conscious/unconscious)

#### ACTIVITIES CONNECTED WITH THE PROCESS OF VOICING

- Effects of stereotypes and prejudices
- Relations between target and non-target groups
- Structure and culture of power
- Understanding another's reality and building capacity for empathy
- Understanding the issues of minority-majority dynamics including the risks in the process of understanding the issues of minority-majority dynamics, the process of integration and interculturalism, and intercultural learning
- Developmental approach to intercultural sensitivity

#### ACTIVITIES CONNECTED WITH THE PROCESS OF BUILDING ALLIES

- From voicing to action
- Valuing differences and building allies
- Making a commitment to action
- Characteristics of allies
- Developing plans for personal and group actions
- Different starting points and privileges
- Dialogue/Constructivist and compassionate listening
- Understanding different roles (active and passive) that contribute to developing and maintaining the cycles of violence
- Understanding and creating solutions/actions that can be taken to support alliance building

Key adults, who have power over or interface with children and families, develop their awareness of inequalities that exist in their communities, how those inequalities affect the well-being of children and families, and how to be advocates for those affected by a society's inequitable norms.

The purpose of the reflective practice in this training is to generate knowledge about social justice and prepare professional educators, policy makers and other potentially key people and change agents to be able to work effectively in educational and policy settings through constructive dialogue among themselves and the communities that they work for.