

OBSERVATORY FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH RIGHTS

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“SCHOOLS AS A FRONT LINE ADVERSARIES OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM”

Main Purpose

Preventing and combating violent extremism by engaging schools as a main frontline institution.

Objectives

- Enhancing school capacities to be engaged in encountering violent extremism.
- Shaping the concept against violent extremism for 600 school students and community members.

Project areas: Kamëz, Elbasan and Pogradec

Duration: February – November 2018

Observatory for Children and Youth Rights (Observatory) in the framework of the small grant scheme of the project "Empowering Civil Society in Increasing Youth Resilience to Violent Extremism" funded by the European Union and implemented by Terre des Hommes Albania in partnership with ISD, CCG and Bedër University, is implementing the project "*Schools as a front line adversaries of Violent Extremism*"

Findings, Challenges, Good Practices and Results

Findings:

- Students are informed about the phenomenon of VE mainly via the internet, social media and TV. This is according to the test results via short questionnaires.
- From the activities it turned out to be a need for treatment with students and parents of topics related to the VE and the factors that promote it.
- School co-operation with local institutions such as police, local government, local NGOs was visible but there is still work to be done.
- Parents' participation in the activities was low despite efforts to make them interested and involved.



- From the short tests conducted during the public debates regarding the trust in the institutions, it turned out that the students knew and trusted more the Municipality and the Police.
- Institution programs that students know or have more knowledge are: inclusive education, community policing, community center schools, gender equality and harmony and religious peace.
- Students at the end of the project activities gained knowledge about anti-social behaviors such as bullying and by the testing resulted they became more familiar with the VE concept and its types. Also, tolerance as a concept and human rights are already more known, but needs to be worked in this regard.
- Reporting way of the antisocial behavior cases by the students in school generally follows the path; the head teacher - psychologist - the head of the institution.
- The role of the psycho-social group in the pilot schools is not felt enough with regard to antisocial behavior cases. This may also be due to their over load.
- In general, schools ignore, minimize or call inexistent the presence of anti-social behaviors, especially bullying, although it is becoming more and more present in schools.
- Pilot schools do not keep evidence about antisocial behavior cases, their types, and the factors that encourage them.
- During the realized activities, it was noticed that school teachers know little or no UNESCO Teacher Guidelines regarding the prevention of VE, published on the official website of Institute for the Development of Education (IDE).

Challenges:

- Schools in general not being a community center are more focused on the implementation of the education program than on community issues, in particular VE.
- At the beginning of the activities as a result of the use of some short questionnaires, resulted a low level of student information on VE phenomenon, its forms and the factors that stimulate it. As a consequence, information is required through school education.
- The source of information about the VE phenomenon for students resulted mainly internet, social media and television. The school should be the frontline in providing information to prevent disinformation, uncontrolled and inaccurate information from students.
- There was a difficulty in organizing the activities at the high school "Ibrahim Rugova" in Kamza because the education process developed in 2 shifts.

Good Practices:

- Collaboration of high school "Dëshmoret e Pojskës" in Hudënisht - Pogradec with local institutions is an example to be followed by the other schools.
- Realization of 1 video for bullying by the students of high school "Ibrahim Rugova", which is not only an expression of increasing of the knowledge level on the phenomenon but also of a critical attitude to it.



- Students confirming the increase of their knowledge on violent extremism (VE) and their creative skills realized a variety of materials during the implementation of the project as; leaflets, posters, photomontage and various essays on bullying, violence, gender equality, tolerance in general and religious tolerance in particular.
- Activity Coordinators demonstrated good organizational and creative abilities in carrying out activities and encouraging the activation of the students.
- In the high school "Mahmud and Ali Cungu" in Elbasan, even after the end of the project activities, in the early days of December, the students themselves created the first debate club for violent extremism. The establishment of the club was announced on fb. of the school and was published on fb. of the Observatory.

Results:

During the implementation of the project, were carried out 18 activities as follows:

- 3 one-day trainings
- 12 public debates
- 3 one-day awareness-raising campaigns

Beneficiaries:

Direct beneficiaries in total 484 (students, teachers, parents and members of the community). Indirect beneficiaries in total 13750 persons (mainly through contact with the direct beneficiaries and the social media, fb. of the Observatory :

https://www.facebook.com/pg/observator.org.al/posts/?ref=page_internal).

- In order to increase the schools capacities to be engaged in encountering violent extremism, are trained 67 teachers and staff members of 3 pilot schools as follows:
 - 25 in the high school "Mahmud & Ali Cungu" Elbasan
 - 22 in the high school "Ibrahim Rugova" Kamza
 - 20 in high school "Dëshmorët e Pojskës" Pogradec
- In function of increasing the capacity of the school, it is prepared in cooperation with the experts of the MESY and IED, a Manual for head teachers “Assisting to develop topics on the prevention of the phenomenon of violent extremism in the high schools”. The Manual contains, among others, 4 topics for addressing the phenomenon of violent extremism with high school students in the upcoming school years as follows:
 - ✓ Human rights and Tolerance
 - ✓ Bullying as anti-social behavior that conducts in violence
 - ✓ Violent extremism and radicalism
 - ✓ Security at school



The manual is made public on the website of Observatory www.observator.org.al

- During the period May – November 2018 in order to shape the concept against violent extremism for the students, teachers, parents and members of the community, have been held 12 public debates) with the participation of **283** individuals . During these debates, invited lecturers from local institutions such as; local government, police, educational institutions, religious representatives, NGOs and local media representatives through addressing different topics helped to raise knowledge and awareness of the participants on the violent extremism phenomenon and tolerance. All activities are made public on the observatory website www.observator.org.al and fb. https://www.facebook.com/pg/observator.org.al/posts/?ref=page_internal .
- During the public debate activities, in response to raising knowledge and awareness, students from 3 pilot schools prepared 4 leaflet models, 3 posters, 1 photo collage and 16 essays expressing their perceptions on the phenomenon of violent extremism and what should be done to prevent it. Students of the high school “Ibrahim Rugova” in Kamza have also prepared a video on bullying.
- During October 2018, are realized three 1-day awareness campaigns (1 in each school) with the participation of **134** individuals. In Pogradec and Elbasan area the awareness campaigns were realized on October 2nd that coincides with the International Day Against Violence. In the Kamza area, the awareness campaign was realized on October 9th .

What is recommended:

- Developing a concrete working plan of schools with local institutions to raise awareness on VE phenomenon and take measures for preventing it. This plan should have the tasks and responsibilities of each local actor and the school to be in the role of the coordinator for the realization of this plan.
- The school needs to work more to increase student information about the VE phenomenon and confronting with its forms.
- Strengthening the family-school-community triangle to confront VE.
- The school should begin to keep evidence of antisocial behavior cases at school and provide opportunities for reporting cases by students, teachers and parents.
- Enhance the effectiveness of the work of the psycho-social group to the identification and prevention of the VE phenomenon in schools.