

Success Stories: Nepal and Jordan 2011

Fostering creativity to promote social change

Acknowledgements

This Success Story would not be possible without the invaluable contributions of the World Day organizers Ms. Neeti Aryal Khanal and Mr. Dadhiram Khanal of APED Nepal, and Ms. Ruba Daibes of Mashrek International School in Jordan. The background information for the Story was gathered through an interview with Mr. and Ms. Khanal and written correspondence with Ms. Daibes, and Ms. Khanal as well as a review of secondary sources.

Activities for the World Day of Prayer and Action for Children (World Day) can take many forms, ranging from large-scale, high-profile celebrations to smaller, targeted workshops and trainings. In 2011, World Day actions organized by Mashrek International School in Jordan and Alliance for Peace, Education and Development (APED) in Nepal, exemplified the latter approach. While each group developed unique World Day actions tailored to meet the needs of the young people involved, these examples share a number of similarities. They both focused on children and youth, built on successful activities which took place in 2010, fostered a sense of community around the common goal of ending violence against children, and leveraged education and creative expression to promote social transformation.

Mashrek International School: Building community to end violence against children

Established in 1992, Mashrek International School is a private, co-educational school in Amman, Jordan, that promotes international understanding and value for cultural diversity among its students. Through its Youth for Change Day, Mashrek School has been engaging students in the World Day of Prayer and Action for Children. Youth for Change Day supports students' learning about important issues in their communities and around the world in order to foster a sense of global interconnectedness. The first Youth for Change Day in 2010 focused on the theme of the Millennium Development Goals. In 2011, Youth for



Drawing by the participants.

Change Day examined issues related to the World Day theme of violence against children including child labor, physical and psychological abuse, and discrimination against girls.

The day was organized by a planning group composed of teachers and school administrators. Because the activities were fully integrated into the school, few expenses were incurred. A modest budget covered the cost for printing the informational booklets for the students and other materials. Preparatory sessions during regular class and advisory periods encouraged students to begin thinking about the theme during the week prior to the Day. At these sessions, teachers introduced the topic through class discussions and the presentation of educational videos.

Mashrek School's 2011 Youth for Change Day mobilized 150 Muslim and Christian students, ages 13 to 15, in a full program which included a keynote presentation, dynamic workshops, a closing plenary session, and a moment of silent prayer. The workshops encouraged students to explore the complex issue of violence against children through exercises such as brainstorming and then

Organizing this event helped me in becoming more aware of the importance of education in creating change, it made it very clear that such events can and will make a difference in the world and that collaborating together and raising our students' awareness will actually make them better global citizens who respect diversity and have tolerance and open mindedness.

-Ruba Daibes, Mashrek International School

translate their understanding to action through activities. Creative expression was an important aspect of this element of the program during which students developed art, theatrical sketches and social media campaigns inspired by the World Day theme. Other students deepened their learning through community outreach and service. The momentum of the World Day and Youth for Change Day carried on long after the day through students' continued involvement in local community service campaigns.

Tips:

- Begin planning early.
- Find ways to involve all participants in the planning process.
- Look for ways to connect local issues and global issues through the theme for the actions.

Alliance for Peace, Education and Development: Facilitating understanding through creative art

Alliance for Peace, Education and Development (APED) is a small non-governmental organization, which has been working to foster peace, education and development in Nepal since 2009. They carry out their work through a team of social workers, educators, researchers and social activists. APED began organizing World Day actions in 2010, including an art workshop for students from a school for children with hearing impairment in Kathmandu. The 2010 workshop engaged a nationally acclaimed artist to facilitate the young peoples' artistic expressions of peace through the use of religious symbols.

We the children

Are the buds of today

And flowers of tomorrow

Do not commit mistakes denying us our rights

It is our right to be able to read and write

All should be responsible

To ensure our right

Listen all friends

No one should commit

Violence against children

We should make everyone aware

About violence against children

(Excerpt from a poem composed by a group of students with visual impairments that participated in the 2012 workshop. Translated from Nepali.)



In 2011 APED expanded the workshop to include children with hearing and visual impairments and children without disabilities. This expansion was based on the recognition that in order to draw attention to the issues affecting children with disabilities, it is important to involve a diverse group so that everyone can

Sometimes we adults set about to organize a programme about children involving children keeping their best interests on our heart. Then, somewhere along the way [we] forget that they are children. They like to play, they like to chat, they like to paint and they want to have fun.

- Ms. Neeti Aryal Khanal, APED Nepal

cultivate an understanding of the experience of children with disabilities. The workshop's theme of violence against children has particular relevance for children with disabilities, as in Nepal they experience some of the worst forms of abuse.



Children at the Creative Workshop

The structure of the workshop, which was hosted at the Nepal Academy of Fine Art, honored the creativity and perspectives of its 28 young participants ages 9 to 14. A UNICEF Child Protection Officer gave a brief presentation on violence against children to focus the session around the theme for the day and engage participants to share their views on the issue. Next, Mr. Rabin

Kumar Koirala, a Council Member of the Academy and Ms. Manisha Gauchan, a

nationally acclaimed poet, facilitated the substantive creative segment of the program. They invited participants to select a medium of expression (art or poetry) and use it to explore their thoughts and feelings. During this period, religious leaders from several faiths observed the children's creative process. A tea break offered an opportunity for the religious leaders to speak with the children about their experiences making the artwork and poetry. The program concluded with a short but impactful presentation from religious leaders. Christian, Jain and Sikh religious leaders shared messages from each of their religions about protecting children from violence. The workshop demonstrated the unifying power of creative expression, facilitating meaningful connections among people of different ages, faiths, abilities and professions.

Tips:

- Always keep in mind the interests of children when designing activities for them.
- Create space for meaningful engagement between children and religious leaders.
- If your activity involves children with disabilities, be sure to make the necessary accommodations to facilitate their full participation (this may include securing interpreters and trained educators to support participation).

