

Young Negotiators Program

CCRR's Young Negotiators Programs are based on negotiating model developed at Harvard Law School (see Fisher, Ury, and Patton: "Getting to Yes", Harvard, 1991). The main idea is that structured negotiation should aim to overcome conflict by clarifying the underlying interests. The method seeks "win-win" situations wherever possible. If there is no room for mutual gains, fair standards independent of either side should be the framework for negotiation. The approach of CCRR in the Palestinian context is to promote values such as peace, justice, democracy and non-violence and to give students the opportunity to apply and come to appreciate the value of basic negotiation techniques.

In 2001, CCRR started the first Young Negotiators Program with 40 hour training in a number of governmental schools in Bethlehem and Jericho. In the first stage, the workshop targeted social workers (21 social workers from different schools). In second stage, the newly trained social workers built on their experience by training 10th grade students. The CCRR chose 10th grade students because of the experience the center had gained in programs: Adolescents are about to leave their childhood behind and to become adults. CCRR wants to support them in this critical phase of their development that will affect their behavior for the rest of their lives.



Director of the Ministry of Education in Beth-lehem issuing certificates



Mr. Noah Salameh & The Governor of Beth-lehem City at the Conference.

In the third stage, the social workers convinced teachers of the importance of the course, getting them to volunteer in the workshop.

All steps of the program were coordinated with the respective school management. The program concluded with a one day conference. The final meeting was attended by more than 120 guests - teachers, school principals, students, social workers, and several guests, like the City Governor of Bethlehem or the Director of the Ministry of Education.

The introduction of the Young Negotiators project into Palestinian schools was met with a high level of interest and support. The project's design ensured the participation of different participants in the educational system. It directly involved all parties of the educational process in the program. We believe that this design facilitated the program's implementation. Moreover, it will be useful with regard to the future expansion of the program.

Although the workshops in the educational sector have been well-received, we are worried about the sustainability of our programs in an environment where violence appears to be ever growing. In future, we will try even harder to adapt our workshop to take into account the specific situation the workshop's participants find themselves in: We need to promote our message among parents, convincing them that the workshop is good for their children. Furthermore, we need to keep the message of non-violence alive after the workshop. Therefore, we need to campaign more actively for non-violence, promoting a value, which until now has been leading a shadowy existence in the Palestinian society.

Facilitating Teachers workshop at the final meeting of the program, Shepard's Hotel Bethlehem, June 15th, 2002

Introducing the techniques of conflict resolution taking "Sulha" as example proved to be the only way to reach the youth. If they open up, they find out about the positive impact of conflict resolution through very practical games. In order to make this possible, we introduced conflict resolution techniques not as "Western way" of dealing with conflict, but as a set of ideas that are deeply rooted in predominantly Muslim Palestine, CCRR focuses on Islamic teaching and the Palestinian culture that supports negotiation and dialogue.