

Global Youth Voices - Middle East
A Program of CISEPO and TeenNet Research (University of Toronto)

Update on May 14-19, 2006 Mission

This Mission represents a huge milestone for CISEPO and Global Youth Voices. A key event took place on May 18th, when a Youth Forum was held bringing together over 40 young people (grade 9 students) from our Israeli and Palestinian high school sites. In attendance at the Forum were youth and adult facilitators from four schools: a) Segev Shalom: a Bedouin community in the South of Israel, b) Tuba – Zangaria: a Bedouin community in the North of Israel, c) Eynut Yarden: a school serving Jewish kibbutz in Israel's Galilee region, and d) Friends School: serving Palestinian youth in Ramallah.

The day began with presentations by each group concerning their photography and action projects. The first presentation, by the youth from Tuba, focused on prevention of drug use, through a video which the youth wrote, directed and acted in, exploring peer pressure and drug use. The group also presented their detailed research on the effects and dangers of drug use through a PowerPoint presentation. Already connection was felt between the youth groups, as the youth from Eynut Yarden also choose to focus on drug use, through a PowerPoint presentation which included musical clips, as well as a poster-board collage of their photography.

In a very engaging presentation, youth from the Friends School in Ramallah showcased their Photovoice work, by displaying and describing their photos, which covered topics such as graffiti and vandalism, schoolyard violence and Israeli checkpoints. For their action project the group is planning a presentation on youth smoking, which will be delivered to their school peers at one of their weekly chapel meetings.

The final presentation by the group from Segev Shalom featured videos and presentations covering two topics: a) demolition of Bedouin homes in unrecognized communities, and b) celebration of Bedouin traditions and culture, including discussion of traditional herbs and medicines, traditional dress and music.

In the afternoon all of the youth sat down with each other, cross-culture and borders, to get to know each other one-on-one. This was a very strong, transforming moment, which provided the opportunity to dispel misconceptions that each group had been taught about each other.

This project is a true example of community-based action research. Before the Youth Forum, the project team visited each community and met with the principal, school teachers and parents from each school. We consistently heard comments related to the positive impact of the project on the young people involved, and the strong commitment on the part of the school and community members to continuing this valued work. The project results are available on the Global Youth Voices website:

http://www.globalyouthvoices.org/action_projects.html

Building on this initial Youth Forum, our upcoming efforts will focus on engaging more schools, particularly in Jewish and Palestinian communities. Also, we are developing strong partnership networks in Jordan, and plan to expand the cross-border initiative to include Jordan in 2006/2007, and then additional countries in the Region.

This research program was funded by grants from the Peter A Silverman Foundation and from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR).