Call for Input: Examples of initiatives to foster peace-seeking spirit

Report Form

Date of report: September 24, 2019

Name of municipality: Tehran

Name of country: Iran

Title of peace education initiative

“Little Narrators”

The initiative was implemented by

☐ School  □ Municipality  □ NGO


Theme/Aim

One of the main objectives of this project is raising awareness about the effects of war among children and also familiarizing children around the world with narratives of one another. Next is Examining the consequences of Iran-Iraq war on the 3rd and 4th generation after war through their paintings. Collecting narratives of children being exposed to war or to the aftermath of it is the other aim pursued by this project.

Participants (age, school grade, number, etc.)

In Sardasht: 60 children in fifth grade: 30 girls + 30 boys
In Tehran: Sedaghat Girl’s school: 7 girls (fifth grade)
Hadis Early childhood education center: 17 girls+ 17 boys

Location

Saradasht- west Azerbaijan Province- Iran:
Kosar Girl’s Elementary school
Enghelab Elementary school
Tehran:
Sedaghat Girl’s Elementary school
Hadis early childhood education center

Date(s) of initiative

December 5, 2018 to July 19, 2019

The initiating dates refers to time that the idea of this project founded. The ending date belongs to the last exhibition held from the paintings collected from this project. Please note this project still goes on, and Children department of Tehran Peace Museum seeks to develop it.

The workshops held in Sardasht for school students lasted for one day.

Please answer the questions below clearly and concisely.

1. Please describe the initiative.

This project initiated by a question: “How would do the children who live in cities exposed to wars and weapons of mass destruction and still face the aftermath of wars, look at their cities?” For finding an answer to this question, Children department of Tehran Peace Museum (TPM) gained some information regarding the Sardasht massacre through Tehran Peace Museum’s permanent exhibition, guide of the museum who are the war veterans affected by chemical weapons, diaries of survivors, TPM’s oral history.

Sardasht was chosen for this project, because it was the first town in modern history being bombarded by chemical weapons on 28 June 1987.

In Sardasht, workshops were held for four classes at girls’ and boys’ schools. Workshops started by a short introduction of TPM and the Children Department. Afterwards, story of “Elephant in dark” was told for the students – an Iranian story based on the poem by Rumi.

Story of “Elephant in dark”: Some years ago, in a town not very far from here, there were people who did not have any image of an elephant. They were very curious to know what elephant is! What does it look like? What color is it? And many many other questions. But one day, merchants from India brought an elephant to that town. When they arrived it was pretty dark, they put the elephant in a room with no light. People who could not wait till the morning, curiously came to see the elephant, and as there were many of them waiting behind the door, merchants decided to choose some delegates for visiting the elephant. Delegates were supposed to share their witnesses with rest of the people. So, the door was open and people entered the room, and as it was completely dark, they decided to use senses other than visual sense-this part was paused to ask this question: what senses could help them distinguish the elephant? - They started touching the elephant, one touched its leg, and thought an elephant looks like a column, the other one touch its ear and thought of it as a handheld fan; by touching the back of elephant, one thought it looks like a bed, and the last one touched its proboscis while he thought of it as a downpipe. As they were having different perceptions, they ended up having a conflict! But who was really right? – this question was asked here: what would you do if you were them? How would you understand what elephant looks like? – Students came up
with different solutions and they had the time to share them with class. In the end, the solution proposed by the story was retold. Someone brought the candle, so they all could see the elephant.

After telling the story, we told them, it was the story of people who did not know anything about elephant, but there are children in Iran and all around the world who know nothing about your town. We have few basic information about your city, like its geography, history, language, and also that Sardasht is the first town being bombarded. So now, how would you like to introduce your town to other children? After that, they raised their hands one by one to answer this question. For the final step, we divided the students into the groups of 5 or 6 to draw what they had mentioned about their cities. Following are the rules set for students participated in this project:

- Painting must be done in groups (individual paintings are not accepted)
- The topic is chosen by the members of each groups
- Each participant can choose one color, so members of each group need to discuss over choosing the right color.
- By hearing the bell ring, members of each group should change the colored pencils or crayons with each other.

After coming back to Tehran, the same workshop with the same content was held for a girl’s elementary school called Sedaghat and also the Hadis early childhood education center. The result of these workshops displayed in two exhibitions, one in Tehran and another one in Sardasht. The opening day of the exhibition is Sardasht, co-occurred on the 31st anniversary of Sardasht chemical attack.

It is worth mentioning that another workshop is designed from the outcomes of this project.

2. Please tell us about the response from participants.
   · Even though children from Sardasht were mentioning the chemical bombardment of the town, and its consequences on their close relative’s health, but it was not the sole factor for them to introduce their town. They mentioned other characteristics of Sardasht, such as: the green nature, People’s hospitality, delicious foods, clothing and the local dance, etc.
   · Children from Tehran did not mention the war and its consequence anywise. So, in response to our question regarding introducing their city, the mostly mentioned the tall buildings, polluted air, etc.
   · Through the painting exhibition held in Tehran, children from Tehran indirectly learnt about Sardasht massacre.

3. Please tell us about positive outcomes that resulted from the initiative.
   · Developing the cooperation between Iranian Secretariat of Mayors for Peace & municipality of Sardasht
   · Preparing a space for children from other cities ‘such as Tehran’ to know about the Sardasht massacre and narratives of children in this city
   · Designing a workshop for student visits of Tehran Peace Museum from this project
   · Initiating further cooperation with other cities regarding this project such as Poledokhta.

4. Please tell us about the challenges encountered in the initiative if any.

Even though we had gathered many information about Sardasht, but still we had some concerns about the school and students. As people from Sardasht speak Kurdish which quite differs from Farsi –official language of Iran is Farsi- we were wondering if we will be having difficulty for communicating with them.

5. Please identify any materials used in the initiative
   Materials for painting: cardboard (50*70 cm)- colored pencils- Crayons-

6. May the Mayors for Peace Secretariat post the material mentioned in Question 5 on its website?
   ☑Yes *Please attach the material(s).  □No  □Don’t know.
At Kosar girl's elementary school, one of the members of Children department of TPM is telling the story of “Elephant in the dark” for students.

Children are raising hands to share their perspective about their town.
Children are choosing the right color for their painting

Students have come to agree about a topic and they have started painting
Mayor of Sardasht standing in the middle holding the certificate from Mayors for Peace in a meeting with one of the delegates on TPM's Children department.

Mayor Sardasht was present at the first workshop in Girl's school.
At boy’s school, boys painting in groups

Paintings by children from Sardasht
Paintings by children from Tehran