

Community Centers Promoting Sustainable Living

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¹ The views expressed in this document do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.

University of Malta

The University is the highest teaching institution of the State and is open to all those who have the requisite qualifications. There are some 9,000 students including 700 foreign students, following full or part-time degree and diploma courses, many of them run on the modular or credit system.

Centre for Environmental Education and Research

(Faculty of Education)

With the setting up of CEER the University seeks to provide training and research programmes for Malta and the rest of the Euro-Med region that promote Environmental Education and develop a cohort of environmental educators to address the ever increasing need for expertise in this field.

Agenda 21

- Agenda 21 clearly points out that Environmental Education should be at the basis of any strategy aimed at achieving sustainable development.

Agenda 21

- This position is also echoed in the European Parliament's resolution on environmental education which singles out Environmental Education as a very effective strategy to induce a change towards pro environmental behavior.

Agenda 21

- Fourteen years after the Rio Earth Summit, nations are still grappling with the implementation of Local Agenda 21 possibly because not enough attention was focused on the development of the human dimension, i.e., creating enough consensus, developing the necessary skills and promoting participation in decision-making processes to sustain the initiative.

Community Centres Promoting Sustainable Lifestyles

- The three-year project *Community Centres promoting Sustainable Lifestyles*, concluded at the end of 2005 aimed to initiate in partner countries *Community Centres* that bring together the synergistic efforts and resources of formal educational institutions, NGOs, local councils and adults to promote sustainable living particularly in marginalized and disadvantaged communities.

Community Centres Promoting Sustainable Lifestyles

- This was achieved by exploring specific community needs and by helping community members to design programmes that respond to these requirements.

Some Lessons learnt ...

- Passive Participation (satisfies legal requirements but ...)
- Active Participation

Some Lessons learnt ...

- There are various Barriers to participation ... location, timing, language etc.
Eg. 1. golf course public hearing
eg. 2. rural plan Malta

Some Lessons learnt ...

- Children
- Women
- Youth
- Disabled
- Elderly

Needs time and resources

Some Lessons learnt ...

Training in Participation

Policy Makers



Citizens

Some Lessons learnt ...

It is well established that creating and handing down plans decided upon by one group and imposing them on other groups rarely works. The project's "core" dimension was the bottom-up approach that was adopted to promote sustainable development. The project asked all partners not to propose a *set of fit-all guidelines/rules determined by 'the experts'* but to bank upon *the experiences of people directly involved and affected by particular environmental issues and to explore ways of resolving them.*

This "*bottom up*" dimension takes on a special significance when working with marginalized communities since it puts often ignored community members ... without official status or positions ... at the centre.

Some Lessons learnt ...

For the purposes of the project, environmental issues were not treated in a narrow scientific manner but rather in a multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary manner, thus providing a more holistic understanding of the issue's various dimensions.

Also people who define the environment broadly – to include a focus on the conditions of people's lives - are usually more willing to take on environmental problems than those who define the environment narrowly.

Some Lessons learnt ...

- **One desired characteristic of this project was the continuous transfer of knowledge and exchange of experiences among the communities. In this sense the success of this sharing methodology depends solely on the disposition of partners to circulate information ...**

Some Lessons learnt ...

The project refutes current practices of duplication of work, wastage of human and financial resources, and conflicts of territoriality between the parties concerned. It in fact requires every project partner and its local network of community agencies to share ideas, techniques, experiences and advice with other project partners.

Some Lessons learnt ...

- The positive involvement of people perceived to be in a position of “power” to carry things forward, or to help finance proposals, is often a factor that reassures and motivates members of community centres working for an improvement in their local environment.

Some Lessons learnt ...

- A “human scale dimension” permits the development of the whole person, and is dependent on the quality of relationships within the communities. These relationships are founded on mutual respect and on care for the needs of others and the environment, where each person is valued equally, and encouraged to make a full contribution to the community to which he or she belongs. One possible reason why Local Agenda 21 has only had modest success is that not enough attention was focused on the development of the human dimension.

Some Lessons learnt ...

- In the project's philosophy learning itself was seen as an active process where learners become aware of their own development and identify for themselves how to extend the range of their understanding towards more sustainable lifestyles. They are able to control what, how and at what pace they learn.

Some Lessons learnt ...

- Each community has its own story - and the preparation of a community resource inventory during the initial stages is both an acknowledgement of the local character as well as a celebration of the learner's resources.

Some Lessons learnt ...

- The active participation and learning of the community members – though no guarantee in itself - provides the right conditions for member ownership of the project and for the initiative to continue beyond the life of the projects.

Water and schools ...

- **6 to 8 years:**
- Raise awareness on the importance of water ...
- Analyze the consumption of water ...
- Orient students towards water conservation ...
- Promote actions for a sustainable use of water and values of co-responsibility ...

Water and schools ...

- **8 to 10 years:**
- Reflect on access to water and on its quality in various parts of the world ...
- Understand the **causes of water shortage** ...
- Promote actions, individual and collective, for a sustainable use of water ...

Water and schools ...

- **10 to 12 years:**
- Work on the inter-relationship between the environment and development ...
- Know the availability of water in various regions ...
- Make a link between water shortage and the consumer model/management model of water ...
- Promote actions for a sustainable use of water and values of co-responsibility ...

Water and schools ...

- **12 to 14 years:**
- Reflect on models of leisure, tourism, sport ... Taht can be more fair and sustainable.
- Refelct on the right to water ..
- Analyse a concrete situation related to the right to water ...
- Acquire a more global vision on the problems realated to water ...
- Make a line between water shortage and the consumer model/management model of water ...

Water and schools ...

- **14 to 17 years:**
- Reflect on consumer models that can be more fair and sustainable.
- Analyse water management from a perspective of the right to water ... and debate civic actions that aim for more social/environmental justice ...

Case Studies

- Fair Trade
- Local Money
- Eco-tourism/Responsible Tourism
- Solar Cooking
- Conservation of traditional Seed
- Traditional/indigenous knowledge
- Revival of traditions
- Environment/Museum/Music Day
- Waste Pact ...

Pedagogy of the Oppressed

- Freire puts forth a pedagogy in which the individual learns to cultivate his/her own growth through situations from his/her daily life that provide useful learning experiences.

Pedagogy of the Oppressed

- This is not a pedagogy for the oppressed; it is rather a pedagogy of the oppressed. The subject should build his/her reality from the circumstances that give rise to the daily events of his/her life. The texts that the individual creates permit him/her to reflect upon and analyze the world in which s/he lives - not in an effort to adapt himself/herself to this world, but rather as part of an effort to reform it and to make it conform to his/her historical demands.

Environmental Justice

- ... do hereby re-establish our spiritual interdependence to the sacredness of our Mother Earth; to respect and celebrate each of our cultures, languages and beliefs about the natural world and our roles in healing ourselves; to insure environmental justice; to promote economic alternatives which would contribute to the development of environmentally safe livelihoods; and, to secure our political, economic and cultural liberation that has been denied for over the years of colonization and oppression, resulting in the poisoning of our communities and land and the genocide of our peoples ...
- <http://www.ejnet.org/ej/principles.html>

Agenda 21 within an occupation

Democratization of:

- Water
- Electricity
- Solar Cooking

An indigenous Agenda 21!!!

Community Centres promoting Sustainable Lifestyles

- The current international situation based on conflict rather than mediation is in itself a reminder of the dominant unsustainable practices that serve as an unwanted backdrop to all our endeavors. Creating sustainable lifestyles starts by actually living out lifestyles that are an antithesis to the current dominant paradigm .. the project asked for “*generating change from within the individual through the promotion of sustainable personal lifestyles rather than through coercive extrinsic methods*”

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