

June 22nd, 2010

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Education as Leverage for Building a Culture of Peace

Event: Country Workshop

Date/Place: May 22nd, 2010,
KAS Office

Concept: General Mansour Abu Rashed, Dr. Martin Beck

Organization: KAS Amman, Amman Center for Peace and
Development

1. Program Overview

Saturday, May 22nd, 2010

Amman Center for Peace and Development,
Amman

General Mansour Abu Rashed

Resident Representative of the
Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung,
Amman

Dr. Martin Beck

Project Manager,
Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung,
Jerusalem

Annika Khano

First Session: Civic Education & Democracy

Dr. Munther Al-Share'
Professor and Former Minister of Political
Development, Amman

Second Session: Communication between Teachers for Peace Education

Dr. Awni Faouri
Professor and Director of the Center of
Linguistics,
University of Jordan, Amman

2. Objectives

Following many years of peace talks, the Middle East is still struggling with considerable cultural and religious conflicts. In order to interrupt the spiral of violence, it is imperative to establish a sustainable foundation for mutual trust. This mutual trust could be build through civic education which is one of the main tools in conflict resolution in multi-ethnic and multicultural societies.

The EU-Partnership for Peace Program "Utilizing Middle Eastern Civic Education

as Leverage for Peace" provided participants from the educational sector with information and working material on educational tools and mechanisms for peace education. The participants came from over 15 schools in Palestine, Israel and Jordan. The EU-project was financed by the European Commission and implemented in the period of April 2007 to March 2009. It aimed at training a new generation of teachers in the Middle East in implementing concepts of citizenship, democracy, co-existence and tolerance.

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As a follow-up event, KAS Amman in cooperation with the Amman Center for Peace and Development organized a workshop entitled "Education as Leverage for Building a Culture of Peace" on May 22nd, 2010. This workshop aimed at reviving and fostering the introduction of civic education in school teaching. Furthermore, the participants were provided with an overview over the history of democracy in the Middle East among the local community and with different approaches on conflict management.

20 teachers from Jordan who had participated in the EU program attended the workshop and were trained on Democracy Education. The experts and participants discussed issues such as equality, tolerance, justice and the rule of law, pluralism and active citizenship and their implementation in society. The participants were also trained in their communication skills to improve the dialogue with students.

3. Course of the event

General Mansour Abu Rashed opened the workshop by thanking Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and the teachers who participated at the workshops held in Jordan, Israel and Palestine. He pointed out that Jordan is an example of a tolerant and peaceful society. Every citizen, regardless of his racial, religious, ethnical or social background exercises his rights and duties. He added that without the help of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and its offices in the region, the project could not have been implemented.

Dr. Martin Beck pointed out the high relevance of cooperation between Palestinians, Jordanians and Israelis. Even in periods of bad overall political relations,

there are areas of mutual interest. Certainly, peace education is among them. As a reaction to actions of the current Israeli hardliner government, His Majesty King Abdallah stated in an interview given to the Wall Street Journal in early April 2010 that Jordanian-Israeli relations have reached their "lowest point" since the peace treaty of 1994. After this interview, Israel even intensified policy actions contradicting international law. Particularly in the face of these regrettable circumstances, KAS Amman highly appreciates that the workshop connecting Jordanian, Israeli and Palestinian civil society could be held for the sake of promoting peace in the region.

Annika Khano, who was the project manager of the EU project from 2007 to 2009, talked about the outcome of the workshop series. They were a success in terms of enhancing the dialogue for peace. She then pointed out that one major aspect of the workshops was to cope with the fears of cooperation between Jordanian, Palestinian and Israeli teachers. She stressed the fact that KAS is doing its best to bring together Israelis, Palestinians and Jordanians for the sake of future generations to live in better terms with each other.

In his introduction to "Civic Education and Democracy", **Dr. Munther Al-Share'** talked about the difference between the meanings of civic education studies and civic education. He defined the civic education studies as a branch of Political Science which deals with citizens' affairs, rights and duties and which dated back to the time of Confucius' and Plato's philosophy and teachings. Civic education is rather an educational process designed to raise awareness and to impart the

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knowledge on principles of citizenship, civic and political rights.

Dr. Al-Share' explained that democracy is a form of governance practiced directly by the people or through their elected representatives. Although there is no specific and universally acceptable definition of democracy, there are two fundamental principles that must be included in any definition, namely equality and freedom: All citizens are equal before the law and freedom rights are protected under the Constitution.

Since the two principles are reflected in the concept of citizenship which is a social and legal link between citizens and their democratic society, there are a number of important responsibilities and duties, which if shackled would lead to the obstruction of democracy. The duties of a responsible citizen include showing commitment to democracy in word and deed, obeying the laws passed by parliament, exercising constructive criticism of the political process and civic life, participating in the development and improvement of the political process and civic life, paying taxes and not trying to evade them, joining military service if requested and participating in voluntary work.

The concept of citizenship is the cornerstone in understanding the mechanisms of democracy and its work. Knowledge of theoretical concepts of democracy is not sufficient; rather one should gain experience that leads to the development and refinement of both "civic disposition" and the necessary "participatory skills" in order to exercise the rights and duties associated with democracy.

At the end of his contribution, **Dr. Al-Share'** stressed that "civic disposition" and "participatory skills" are necessary to

make citizenship effective in a democratic society. They could be developed through civic education and ongoing training, students' participation in the student democratic bodies or cooperative learning activities.

Country surveys proved that the programs of "civic education" become more effective if training workshops consist of more than three meetings. Furthermore, the style of teaching or training should be participatory (groups, role plays, activities to resolve problems, dramatic situations, imitation of political or judicial activities). Effectiveness then is much higher than lecture-style teaching.

The paper presented by **Dr. Awni Faouri** dealt with communication skills in modern and ancient times in addition to the general objectives of communication skills in terms of form and components. He examined in detail the practical aspects of effective communication methods and measures that the participants studied during the workshop series of the EU-Partnership for Peace Program. **Dr. Faouri** then talked about the importance of improving communication skills as a means of expressing empathy and comprehension of others by creating an interactive process between the parties involved.

He concluded that the knowledge of how to communicate and transfer democratic values and promote non-violent conflict resolution leads to a higher political participation.

At the end of the workshop, **Dr. Al-Share', General Mansour Abu Rashed** and **Dr. Martin Beck** handed over certificates of participation to the Jordanian teachers who participated in the project during the last 2 years and who have already been working on

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applying the new techniques of teaching at their schools.

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4. Conclusion

The workshop organized by KAS Amman and the Amman Center for Peace and Development marked a first important follow-up event of a workshop series within the framework of the EU-Partnership for Peace Program "Utilizing Middle Eastern Civic Education as a Leverage for Peace". The participants were given a further training in teaching principles of democracy and different approaches on conflict management. The participants highly appreciated that KAS Amman and the Amman Center for Peace and Development organized another workshop in which the most important working results were summed up and elaborated. **Dr. Munther Al-Share'** emphasized in his presentation the importance of a true understanding of both concepts of democracy and citizenship. **Dr. Awni Faouri** made clear that not only information on the functioning of a state and one's duties as a citizen is important. Communication skills are also of a major significance to strengthen peace efforts in the region.

The teachers who participated in this project will apply in their work what they have learned during the workshop series. The workshop will therefore have a major impact on education in Jordan as it trained teachers in principles of democracy and citizenship and in teaching methods to impart these concepts to school students.