



Challenging Gender Roles for Prevention of Trafficking

NEWSLETTER

May — August, 2011

The achievements within the 6th phase of project “Challenging Gender Roles for Prevention of Trafficking” provided proof of its significance with regard to derogation of traditional gender stereotypes, as communication was maintained both with the society and the opinion and policy makers. The 6th phase saw girl- and boy group activities being finalized, leaders participating in training of trainers in Riga and researchers starting to analyze data and preparing the research report. As the end of the project approaches, the partner organizations have engaged themselves in measures aimed at securing the sustainability of the project and its aims.

Summary of project

Challenging Gender roles for Prevention of Trafficking is a joint Åland-Latvian project aiming at combating stereotypical gender perceptions at a grass-root level in order to undermine conditions for development of gender related violence, human trafficking and sexual slavery.

The project is focusing on preventive work through empowerment of young girls and boys.

The Project is carried out by the Åland Islands Peace Institute, Åland, Finland, and the Resource Center for Women, Marta, Riga, Latvia from October 2009 until December 2011. The Project is financed within the framework of the INTERREG IV Programme of the European Regional Development Fund. National co-financing is kindly provided by the Government of Åland.

Policy advocacy and sustainability of project

During the current project phase significant policy advocacy activities were carried out, in Latvia including lobby for criminalisation of buyers of sexual services (carried out within social and political agendas of the global campaign “Stop Selling of Sex”). Meetings with competent Saeima members were organized and experts of Centre “Marta” participated at the discussion within the Human Rights and Public Affairs Committee of the Saeima. A productive communication with the Chancellery and the newly elected President of State A. Bērziņš was started and cooperation with the State Border Guard and Airport Rīga was established and maintained. A public event — a street procession — was organized, gaining broad recognition within the society and the media. As the end of the project approaches, the partner organizations have involved in activities and meetings aimed at securing the sustainability of the project and its aims.

Within the project a current challenge is to ensure financing for group activities in both countries. The Latvian partner Marta has been partly successful in this aspect and group activities will continue after the end of the project. On Åland, however, it remains uncertain if all groups can be

sustained. The ÅIPI continues to discuss with local actors how girl- and boy group activities can be sustained and financing secured.

In connection to the campaign "FAIR SEX" the ÅIPI has been requested by school staff to develop and hold work shops on the campaign content in local upper secondary schools. The ÅIPI is currently investigating whether such activities can be financed and carried out during 2011 but also on a regular basis in coming years.

In a wider sense, the ÅIPI is currently planning for future activities for prevention of violence among youngsters, both within its local and international co-operations. On the international level a conference for leaders of girl- and boy groups is being planned to be carried out in May 2012. On Åland, several organisations and institutions are working with preventive work in schools. During 2011 the ÅIPI has experienced that there might be a need for further co-ordination of those activities, why a round-table-discussion on preventive work in schools, actors and methods is planned to be carried out in December 2011.

Publicity

Informative posters with information on risks for human trafficking, as well as hotline numbers were placed in Airport Rīga.

A press event was hosted at the State Border Guard, gaining broad publicity on the Latvian media. In cooperation with the State Border Guard trips to Latvia's East border points were organized, where signatures were gathered, urging for criminalisation of buyers of sexual services. Furthermore, information on risks for human trafficking was also placed in all border points of Latvia.



Active communication was carried out on social networks *Twitter*, *Facebook* and *draugiem.lv*. In order to reach the project goals more effectively, cooperation with other NGOs was strengthened by forming partnerships and elaborating collaborations. The materials of the 2nd informative campaign *Liela Šķirba* were distributed to 14–18 years old youngsters at the biggest music and art festival in the Baltic “Positivus” in Salacgrīva (July 15–16). In cooperation with AVON and “Cosmopolitan” an interactive presence was ensured at a public event for young ladies *Bikini Bash 2011* (July 23), organized by “Cosmopolitan”. Informative materials of *Liela šķirba* were also distributed during the event. In cooperation with *The Body Shop* a procession from the Central Railway Station to the Saeima was organized. The procession was a part of the global campaign “Stop Selling of Sex”. At Saeima the procession participants met I. Circene, head of the Human Rights and Public Affairs Committee of the Saeima, and handed her a letter of almost 16 000 signatures of inhabitants of Latvia. The procession also gained broad recognition of the media.



On Åland, the information campaign FAIR SEX, prepared in phase five, was launched through radio commercials, Facebook, websites, an event and posters put up in schools. The aim of the campaign was to encourage young people to talk about issues related to sexuality, such as: What do I want? How can I express what I want? How can I know what my partner wants? How should I relate to what other people think? To talk and think about such issues can enhance the chances of experiencing positive sexual relationships and reduce the risk of being exposed to or committing sexual violence. The campaign includes drawings and questions concerning sexual situations and relationships.

After the training of trainers in Riga local media on Åland were invited to a press conference the 29th of August. The focus of the press conference was the training of trainers that had been held the day before in Latvia. A couple of GG- BG leaders attended this press conference and told about their experience of the training in Latvia and about meeting the Latvian leaders. The press conference resulted in a newspaper article in *Nya Åland*.

6th of July 2011 an interview with ÅIPI intern Lovisa Helgesson Arlid was broadcasted in the Åland radio. The interview was the first one in an interview series named "Åland and sexual slavery". The series was followed up by a panel debate on the same topic, in which the information Officer of the ÅIPI participated.

Lovisa has during her six weeks at the ÅIPI - within the project "Challenging Gender Roles for Prevention of Trafficking" - mapped the situation on Åland concerning sexual slavery and prostitution. Through fact collection and interviews she has tried to assess what institutions and actors may be concerned with issues of sexual slavery and prostitution and what information and knowledge about those phenomena that is available on the islands. Her results are to be compiled in a report to be launched in the autumn of 2011.

Research activities

The researchers summarized the information gathered during the previous project phases. The previously conducted qualitative interviews with group members and leaders were analyzed. The results of the questionnaires were analyzed statistically. The analysis will give the researchers an opportunity to draw conclusions that will be reflected at the general summary of the research. The first indicative results of the research under the title "Girl and Boy Group Method Unfolds Gender Stereotypes Leading to Gender-based Discrimination in Latvia and Åland — a Call for Preventive Work with the Youth" were presented at the 12th European Congress of Psychology held in Istanbul, July 4—8, 2011. Interviews with group members and leaders, as well as group observations indicated that as a result of being in the group, girls and boys have become less dependent on views of others. They have started to understand their own rights and those of others. That contrasted automatic following to expectations of peer groups. Peer group expectations towards behaviour and attitude are usually gender stereotyped. It enhances the possibility to become active citizens in the future who make decisions and choices according to their talents and interests in socially adaptive ways. Group observations also indicated that girls and boys have learned better to say a "no" when needed, and furthermore to insist on making their life choices independent of gender-based stereotypes and norms.

Girl Groups and Boy Groups

The girl and boy group method is a Nordic model of direct work with young people aiming at strengthening individuals, enhancing the participants' possibilities to become active citizens and at the same time questioning prevailing gender stereotypes in order to achieve greater gender equality and a non-discriminatory setting for individual development.

The last girl and boy group-meetings were held in June. Some of the groups also went to activities (such as mini golf) as part of the termination of the GG- BG meetings.

During the current phase of the project the method manual (handbook) about the girl and boy group method, written by Finnish trainer mia Hanström, was commented and reviewed both in Latvian and Swedish on several occasions.

After making all the corrections, the handbook was handed in for layout at the printing company.



At the beginning of the current phase a support meeting was organized for group leaders in Latvia. During the meeting group leaders exchanged their experience in working with the youth groups, the difficulties and problems they have encountered and the positive achievements they have experienced. Group leaders were given the feedback of the project researchers with regard to leading the group work. Furthermore, leaders were presented the results of a conference on prostitution and human trafficking, which took place in Copenhagen, Denmark. At the closure of the meeting group leaders obtained a certificate for participation at the lectures and support meetings organized during the project, as well as for their work with youth groups.

For the leaders of the girl and boy groups on Åland, two support meetings were arranged. The first support meeting was held on the 4th of May in connection to the launch of the second information campaign and focused on the concept "FAIR SEX", and how the campaign materials could be used in discussions with the groups.

The aim of the Ålandic campaign was to encourage young people to talk about issues related to sexuality, such as: what do I want? How can I express what I want? How can I know what my partner wants? To talk and think about such issues can enhance the chances of experiencing positive sexual relationships and reduce the risk of being exposed to or commit sexual violence.

The second support meeting was held on the 14th of June and also acted as a closing event for the GG-BG activities on Åland. The support meeting was held at the ÅIPI premises, the event was a BBQ where the leaders received diplomas for completing the trainings and for having worked as GG- BG leaders throughout the school year. The GG- BG leaders evaluated the trainings by filling in questionnaires, they discussed the future and the possibility to continue working as GG- BG leaders after the project has ended.

On August 26—28 a training for trainers was organized — a lecture for the future trainers of potential group leaders. 10 participants from Latvia and 6 participants from the Åland, as well as project partners (trainer, project assistant and research assistant) took part in the training. During the training participants exchanged their experience in working with the youth, they were introduced to activities that can equally well be used in both the youth groups and trainings for potential group leaders and they discussed the key components of a training for potential leaders. During the training seminar participants visited centre “Marta”, learning more about the activities of the centre and receiving more information on the “Fair Sex” campaign of the Åland Islands Peace Institute as well as on the organisation “Youth against AIDS”. During the last day of the training, the participants discussed risks and difficulties in their work, as well as evaluated the training.

