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LivingSidebySide[®]

Youth Training Program In The Kyrgyz Republic

Initial Findings

Presented by
**Legacy International
and
International Center Interbilim**



LEGACY INTERNATIONAL, founded in 1979, is a U.S. (501)(c)(3) organization dedicated to promoting peace by strengthening civil society and fostering a culture of participation worldwide. It is affiliated with the UN through its ECOSOC special consultative status and listed as a PVO with USAID. www.legacyintl.org



Shanti Thompson (Vice President: Training & CFO) serves as Training and Design Specialist and oversees financial management. She has 30 years of experience directing projects in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Indonesia, Russia, and Ukraine. Ms. Thompson is the creator of Legacy's *LivingSidebySide®* curriculum and its *Leadership Development Initiative*, a multi-layered curriculum program (for teachers, administrators, and students) which was implemented in 105 schools in New York.



Marlene Ginsberg (Vice President/Development) serves as Project Director. She has 25 years' experience in project design and direction, and is part of Legacy's strategic planning team. Since 1994, she served as the director of the five Central Asian projects: *LivingSidebySide®*; *Kyrgyz Women Leaders & NGO Development*; *Responsible Governance for Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Tajikistan*; *Religious Leaders Program for Kazakhstan*; and *Conflict Prevention in the South of Kyrgyzstan* (government/law enforcement, & NGO) and has directed many projects with Russians and Ukrainians since 1993.



CENTER INTERBILIM (CIB), Legacy's partner, has been actively providing civil society with consultative-educational, informational and technical services, and non-government organizations' development in Kyrgyzstan since 1994. CIB has an extensive history and network of trainers and human rights organizations and implements programs through two offices, in Bishkek and through the Interbilim Resource Center in Osh. www.interbilim.org/kg



Asel Kuttubaeva serves as Project Manager of *LivingSidebySide®* and previously as Coordinator of Legacy's *Women's Leadership and NGO capacity building in KR.* Her specialties include advocacy and lobbying, elections, youth development, leadership, citizenship and democracy, human rights, and social mobilization, and she has been a gender specialist since 2003."



Chinara Irisova serves as Program Coordinator of *LivingSidebySide®* and is based in Osh at the Interbilim Resource Center. Her specialties include training, monitoring and evaluation, youth development, social mobilization and community development, conflict prevention/resolution and reconciliation, leadership, democratic processes and human rights since 2001.



LivingSidebySide®

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Lazokat Tumanbaeva
Teacher-Trainer, School #66
Karasuu, Osh oblast



"I understood the meaning of the phrase, 'If you want to change the world, change yourself.' I understood that our students are not only those that receive grades, but they are individuals with their own identities."

Mavluda Bahavadinova
Teacher-Trainer, School #3
Djalalabad



"...now I understood that my opinion cannot be right always. I learned to accept that there can be a contradictory opinion of others which can also be right. I learned to put myself in the position of others. I learned to listen to others, and to be patient."

Kanymjan Murzakulova
Teacher-Trainer, School #3
Osh city



"Before, I was convinced that women don't have to deal with global issues. Now, I understand that women should be engaged in global issues and make a difference. I understand that peacebuilding is a noble, needed cause. I want to be part of the group of people that is committed to change the world."

Introduction

LivingSidebySide® (LSBS) is a model experiential training program that fosters inter-ethnic understanding, leadership, and conflict resolution skills among youths and adults facing troubled circumstances in countries that have experienced recent strife. Developed by Legacy International, this innovative methodology has been used over 3 decades with Bosnians, Serbs, and Croats; Palestinians and Israelis; Nigerian tribes; Abkhazians and Georgians; Iraqis; and diverse groups from the United States.

LivingSidebySide® was piloted in the southern region of Kyrgyzstan in 2014 by Legacy International and its partner, International Center Interbilim (with offices in Bishkek and Osh). This booklet represents their initial findings from focus groups, interviews, observations, and verbal and written statements. Both teacher/trainers and students reported changes in their own attitudes and behavior and their observations of other participants, during three rounds of training from February to November 2014.

LivingSidebySide®:

- promotes constructive and effective inter-personal communication
- enables participants to build more resilient personal relationships
- teaches teamwork and leadership skills
- develops awareness of and respect for diversity

Program Elements included:

- 36-hour curriculum with manuals for teachers and youths
- Eighteen (18) two-hour sessions held 2-3 times/week over 6-8 weeks
- 20 teachers in February trained in experiential methods and the specific lessons of LivingSidebySide® with a focus on inter-ethnic tolerance and cooperation, leadership, and conflict prevention/peace-building skills
- Inter-ethnic teacher teams trained 553 primarily Kyrgyz and Uzbek youths ages 14-16 in 10 schools in Osh, Djalalabad, and Batken oblasts¹.
- 60 service projects were implemented by 553 youths without funding support from the grant.



¹ The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) simultaneously implemented its external evaluation with 1,200 families and youths in 20 schools. SIPRI's preliminary results are expected summer 2015 and final report summer 2016.

Attendance at program sessions was high, reflecting active interest. In-depth interviews with 16 students² selected at random show that 9 (56%) of the interviewed students did not miss any lessons, 3 (19%) students missed 1 lesson, 4 (25%) students missed 2-3 lessons during the entire 6-8 week program. These findings indicate that most of the students had regular attendance to LSBS lessons.

Only those students who did not miss more than 4 lessons out of 18 lessons were allowed to continue participation and received Certificates of Completion. In all, 92% percent of the full complement of students who participated in the program (553 out of 600 randomly selected students) spent per 2 hours 3-4 days a week after school and successfully completed the program.

Emirbek Avazbekov (on right) School #3 after Navoi Aravan

His teacher commented: "Emirbek stopped getting into conflicts with classmates and now he tries to help them...All trainees changed—before they didn't want to mix and sit with each other, but now they feel ok to change their seats; they trust each other."



Deniza Sekalieva (in middle) School Olymp, Osh

"Before, I used to get irritated very fast and wanted immediately to fight, but now I first try to compromise and not to hurt people."



Gulshan Abdyldaeva, Senior Specialist, Ministry of Education and Science

After observing the first day of teaching training, Gulshan commented:

"...we definitely need LivingSidebySide® in our schools. This program can help our education system fill a gap that we have today – structured tolerance and peacebuilding education. I am sure teachers can make great use of this program and help young people benefit from it and get benefits for themselves, too. I see several venues for its implementation in our schools."



Navruzbek Saifidinov (male, age 14):

Navruzbek studies well, but does not participate in the social life of his class or school. He seemed embittered, and often beat his younger brothers, which resulted in conflicts with his parents. His peers described him as rude, uncouth, and without friends.



At first, he did not participate in role plays or discussions, and treated both trainers and trainees with distrust. During the lesson#7 ("Understanding Stereotypes"), there was a noticeable change. When analyzing stereotypes, he exclaimed: **"There is no bad nationality, there are only individuals with negative character traits!"** After that, he began to be actively involved in lessons. His study habits have improved, he is more sociable, and has made friends with his peers. Navruzbek's mother reports that he has become kinder and more tolerant; he helps her at home, and has stopped beating his brothers.

Cholponai Usubalieva (female age 15):

Cholponai was the new student in the school. She came from Djalalabad city, she had no friends and felt lonely. Her loneliness was mostly due to the fact that she was Kyrgyz in a mostly (82%) Uzbek school. She is a smart girl, has a successful academic performance, and always had a high opinion of herself. This made it difficult to make friends.



During lesson #4, "Understanding of Communication" in the exercise "Spectrum of Communication," there was a task to quickly find friends. She stayed alone. When asked why it happened, she replied: **"I never take the first step to make friends. I like when others take the first step to make friends with me."** But from lesson #5, Cholponai began to recognize her mistakes. She quietly started to change, not only in the program but also in the school. After several more program lessons, she began to listen to others' opinions, respect their choices, and started initiating contact. Later she admitted that she did not want to be the same person she was in the past. She said, **"It doesn't matter whether one is a city girl or a village girl, Kyrgyz or Uzbek; it is most important to be human."**

Meerim Abdyldabekova (female, age 16):

Meerim carries all home responsibilities on her shoulders. She comes and goes discreetly, getting average grades. Her father, who had worked in Russia since Meerim was 9 years old, returned 6 months ago. Meerim has problems with her father, saying it was hard to understand him and that she did not know him because he had been gone for such a long time.



During the first lessons, she was passive and mostly observed. Only at lesson #8, during the exercise "My views on life," did Meerim share her problems. She said, **"I want my family to be happy with my father."** Afterwards, the students advised her about her family, saying such things as, "Your father was trying to earn money for food and clothes," and "He took care of your family." Meerim started to think differently about her situation, and she became more open and happy. She improved her relationship with her family. Now she is an active student involved in all school programs.

Timur Gakin (male, age 16):

When he was young, he only spoke Russian, but his neighbors and playmates only spoke Kyrgyz. He felt lonely and like an outcast. He became silent, closed and lacked confidence. Timur often missed school classes, and was a loner and was not interested in school life.



After participating in the program, Timur realized an important thing – **"If you want to change the world, you need to become the change you wish to see."** He learned that it is enough to use the skills of good listening, mediating and transformational thinking in order to resolve conflicts. Now he does not only participate in classes and school events, but he has become a leader with self-confidence. He said, **"Our future is in our hands: the right hand helps the left hand. I have faith in the rightness of peace and wish to solve problems fairly."**

² "Students' perception of peacebuilding training programs: a case study of LivingSidebySide® in Kyrgyz Republic," Asel Kuttubaeva; Executive Master in Development Policies and Practices, December 19, 2014; The Graduate Institute in Geneva.

Case Study Excerpts

Beknazar Adanov (male, age 16):

Beknazar was living with his father, who works in Russia. His father decided to send him to live in Kyrgyzstan, which Beknazar greatly resented. Relations between father and son deteriorated, and Beknazar felt alienated, offended, and lonely.



During the lessons, Beknazar spoke about his difficulties with his father. It was clear that he loved his father, but was greatly offended by his father's decision. He analyzed his relationship with his father using the conflict resolution methods in Lesson #13. After the discussion he said, ***"It is not good to give into feelings. Rather, it is necessary to approach each act after careful consideration."*** His teachers say that he has now reconciled with his father.

Roman Kuttumidinov (male, age 16):

Roman transferred from a Kyrgyz school to a Russian school after being involved in a conflict which resulted in issues dealing with the police. He is a calm and quiet boy, but in the new school he absolutely became withdrawn. He refers to himself as "silent hour." He could not find a common language with his parents.



During the first 8 lessons, he kept mostly silent, but he became more interested and more participatory with each lesson. All the examples he gave had to do with his relations with his parents. During the social project (Lessons #16 and #17), the students wanted to ask his father, who works at a TV company, to give them media coverage, but he was against it. But the next day, he changed his mind and led the delegation to his father's workplace, where he successfully negotiated free broadcast time for their project. Roman made many new friends after the program, and his relations with his mother and father improved considerably.

Argen Nurlanov (male, age 15):

Argen's parents work in Russia; he, his brother, and his younger sister live with their older sister. His classmates described him as an irresponsible and indifferent student. Indeed, in the beginning of the program, the teacher/trainers had to ask him to come to each class.



His behavior began to change with each lesson, and he began to offer good ideas. During one lesson, his classmates gave him the name of ***"Mister Bright Ideas."*** After that, Argen was always on time for the training and did not miss sessions. He began attending classes regularly and even acted as a mediator (after Lessons #14-15) in the conflict between two friends, reconciling them. He became more involved and helpful at home. At the end of the project, Argen said: ***"Thank you for your patience and willingness to engage me in the project. I know that it was difficult for you to work with me. It seems to me that this program is designed for me and for people like me."***

Aidana Kashkarbekova (female, grade 9):

Aidana is the youngest child in her family. Her parents work in Russia in order to earn money; she lives with her brother and sister-in-law. As the youngest, she was pampered and did not do any tasks around the house and did not want to continue her academic studies into the next grade. Aidana's attitude was closed and fearful, normally keeping silent in class.



After the session on "Feelings and Facts" in Lesson #11, she realized that her sister-in-law was patiently taking responsibility for her. Aidana began to help her sister-in-law at home. She directed and organized the social project. Now she is an active participant in community events and has decided to stay in school and pursue her education.

Program Outcomes³

Outcome #1:

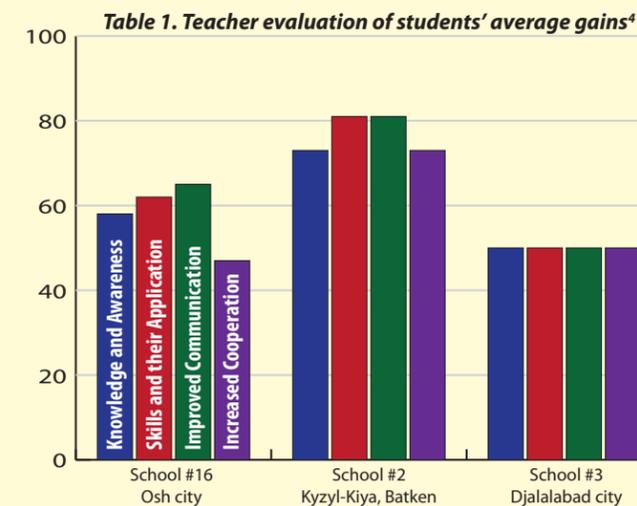
Participants gained new levels of awareness and knowledge on how to avoid, manage, and resolve conflict.

- improvements in interpersonal relations
- reduction of interpersonal conflict between peers, within families, or between different ethnicities
- awareness of the difference between dialogue and debate; recognizing stereotypes
- gaining confidence and self-esteem, a brighter look and more confident walk
- adoption of more positive attitudes toward life and toward others; positive changes in behavior and appearance
- Awareness of the effect of their communication on others – how others see and hear them

Outcome #3:

Participants increased and improved communication among different ethnicities.

- increased tolerance, understanding, and positive communication among youths of diverse cultural backgrounds
- developed new skills to be able to disagree with a positive approach
- reduced personal prejudices toward others



Outcome #2:

Participants gained and applied new skills in their own lives, in their families, and among peers on how to avoid, manage, and resolve conflict.

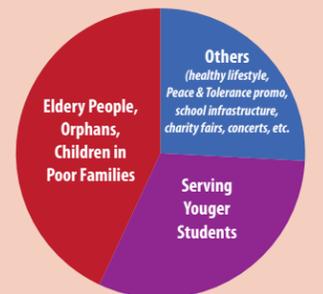
- 90% report using conflict prevention and resolution skills in their families and among friends
- participants increased their leadership ability in society and personal status
- students gained 10-30 new friends during LSBS & in 6-8 months following it
- increased leadership and social skills resulted in students attracting, lobbying, and receiving support from diverse stakeholders to implement community service projects
- 90% said that while life was boring before the program, now they have many exciting ideas, initiatives, and social commitments
- school administrators have greater respect for the students who participated in the program

Outcome #4:

Increased numbers of successful cooperative actions at the local level done by mixed groups of participants.

Planning and implementing service projects enhanced a sense of citizenship and care for others through involvement in successful cooperative actions at the local level in mixed groups.

Table 2. Types of youth community service projects



- 553 youths in 10 schools or communities implemented 60 local projects without grant funding
- 3,634 direct beneficiaries
- 10,014 indirect beneficiaries
- at least 12% of these projects are continuing

³ The information in this section is summarized from several sources: the Master's Degree thesis cited in footnote 2; interviews with participating teachers; and teacher ranking of student learning.

⁴ One teacher team in each oblast evaluated each student from all three rounds of youth training. The above chart indicates the average of all students they taught.

Challenges And How They Were Resolved

Comprehension

Feedback from teachers indicated that 5-10% of students faced some initial challenges in comprehending certain more challenging topics in the curriculum⁵ (e.g., conflict management plan, stereotypes, cultural iceberg, Maslow Pyramid).

Resolution: Supplementary materials are being developed for the trainers⁶.

Table 3. Difficulties with comprehension of materials, and the reasons



Initial Shyness

11% of Tajik, 7.2% of Uzbek and 3% of Kyrgyz students were initially shy and lacking self-confidence.

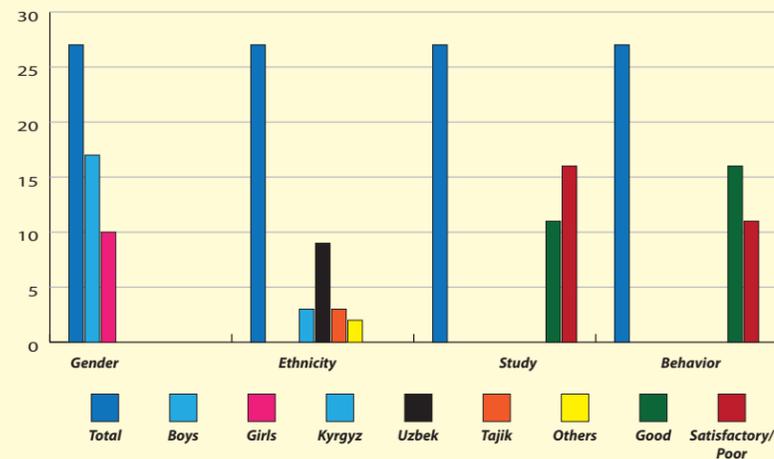
Resolution: By Lesson 10, each training group had successfully overcome shyness and integrated into a working whole.

Initial Lack of Interest is Transformed:

The teacher survey and program reports reveal that students who lacked active interest at the beginning of the program became engaged by lessons 3-6.

Resolution: through the natural progression of the lessons, most of these students progressed to become very active during classes, some taking leadership roles during the implementation of the community service projects.

Table 4. Students with no interest in the beginning of the program



Results Noted

Excerpted from
**COMPLETE ANALYSIS of
 TEACHERS' PRE- & POST FOCUS GROUPS⁷**
 (January and June 2014)

By The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)

1. The acquired skills have encouraged students to realize there is no room for stereotypes in a society.
2. Students appear to have learned how to solve a conflict at school and at home.
3. Altogether, students have become more tolerant and patient toward each other.
4. Students from higher-income families are communicating more and getting along with classmates who come from lower-income families.
5. The participants of the program became more connected and cooperative as a school community.
6. Students were noticeably less provocative in creating disputes or conflicts in class.
7. The training program has been successful in introducing more competence in conflict resolution among teachers, as well as tolerant attitudes and behavior among students.
8. According to annual monitoring conducted at one of the schools by the Kyrgyz school administration, the number of conflicts in that school decreased by 50% in 2014.



⁵ "Students' perception of peacebuilding training programs: case study of LivingSidebySide® in Kyrgyz Republic," Asel Kuttubaeva; Executive Master in Development Policies and Practices, December 19, 2014; The Graduate Institute in Geneva.

⁶ Legacy International and International Center Interbilim staff are currently making adjustments on the Alpha version of the curriculum for a Beta version, based on feedback from staff observations, teacher feedback and student observations.

⁷ Data derived from **Impact Evaluation of peacebuilding educational programme "LivingSidebySide"® in Kyrgyzstan;** Baseline Report (In-house report); January – October 2014. Excerpt: Complete Analysis of Pre- and Post Focus Groups with Teachers.