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Balkan Sunflowers Youth Week Photography Workshops (Pejë/Peç)

Report to UNICEF

October 30, 2000

The UNICEF photography workshops for youths, dedicated to promoting tolerance and understanding between different ethnic groups and cultures, directed by Balkan Sunflowers, was highly successful. The workshops focused on using photography as a tool to integrate children from various communities in Kosovo. It was rewarding to see the children overcome their initial resistance, and grow united in their motivation to learn the art of photography.

Memories of the war have remained strongly imbedded, as we discovered in our dialogue with these children. While tension exists among the Roma, Albanian and Bosniak communities, the workshop facilitators worked hard to create an environment of trust and tolerance, through interactive games and open discussions, that eventually led to a climate of mutual respect.

The two workshops took place in the villages of Orash (September 25 – October 8) and Vitomirice (October 9 – November 5), both in Pejë/Peç municipality.

In all, 29 children have participated in the two photo workshops (17 in Orash, and 12 in Vitomirice).

In both workshops, a Balkan Sunflowers volunteer worked closely with two Albanian educators/translators to create an environment of trust and respect among the children.

Orash Photo Workshop

Participants

The workshop was held in Orash village, located on the outskirts of Pejë, in conjunction with Dardania 3 School. Seventeen children participated, including 6 Roma and 11 Albanian children, between the ages of 9 to 14 years.

The Albanian children showed a restraint and a willingness to work with the Roma children, as their motivation to learn photography increased. Interestingly, the six Roma students live next to the school, but had never studied or set foot inside the Albanian school until two weeks ago.

Five of the six Roma children were illiterate – the exception being the youngest, a nine year-old girl, who was enrolled in a different school. This proved quite challenging during the course of the two-week workshop, where writing assignments were integrated into the creative process for each student. By the end of the workshop period, the Albanian children were volunteering to assist the Roma children to record their ideas, themes, and pictures in their photography journals.

Workshop Structure

Seven sessions were held during a two-week period in a small classroom in the impoverished Dardania 3 School, each lasting three hours. The workshop began on Monday, September 25, and ended on Saturday, October 8.

Initially, the workshop was to have no more than 12 students, but the overwhelming interest by the Orash children led the facilitators to accept 17 – the number of cameras serving as the limit for acceptance. Morale was high among the students, and despite a number of sessions scheduled on weekends, students attended all of them, with the exception of one student who missed the final photography exercise.

Every session began with the children forming a circle and holding hands, and a brief discussion of that day's assignment by the facilitators and children. The chairs in the classroom were arranged into a circle and a discussion ensued about various topics – cultural tolerance, for example, and what it meant to each of the people in the room, along with personal examples of tolerance and intolerance.

This was followed by a discussion about what photography is and how it can be used as a tool to express and expose the current problems in post-war Kosovo. "What does freedom mean?" became the theme for the children's assignment. A series of photos or a collage was developed to express their vision on this subject.

Because the children had trouble thinking in pictures, we devised a series of games that would enable them to exercise their imaginations, while creating a sense of camaraderie and trust between them. Several games were played, such as a game where Roma and Albanian children were paired off and one would become the camera, the other the photographer. One would lead the other, whose eyes remained shut, until the "photographer" would open the "camera's" eyes and take the picture. After that, they would return to the circle, and each pair would explain why they took a particular picture and the emotion behind it.

UNICEF journals were given to each child so they could record and develop the themes for their photography mosaic. Exercises were assigned at the end of each class, to encourage the students to think seriously about their themes and examine their daily lives carefully, in order to record them in photos.

After one week of discussing their assignments, themes, ideas, and playing interactive games to develop trust among the group, the first camera lesson began. Each child was given a manual, 35mm camera and a lesson on composition, lighting, exposure, f-stops, focus, and how to load the film. The children signed a contract, promising to be responsible for each camera, and then took the cameras over-night to work on their theme. The children were asked to record the pictures taken in their journals, followed by a reason or emotion, for each photo.

Exhibit

At the end workshop the children were filled with a sense of achievement. The children selected and arranged the photos they felt best represented their themes and made collages. The pride they felt could be felt when they saw their work exhibited at Nënë Teresa Gallery. The exhibit of the children's photography mosaics at Nënë Teresa Gallery in Pejë took place on October 8.

Although the children were proud of their own work, they showed interest and respect for their fellow students' work. Transportation was arranged for the students so they could attend the exhibit opening and a final discussion was devoted to their work by the facilitators. Children from a nearby community were integrated into the event and invited to perform music and songs, and snacks were provided to add to the children's sense of accomplishment.

Orash Workshop Budget

Item	DM
Translator/facilitator	300.00 DM
17 Disposable Cameras & film development	487.00 DM
Development and 2nd prints	229.50 DM
Driver and car/Villages	150.00 DM
Gas/Driver to exhibit	40.00 DM
Expenses – Mounting photos, etc...	34.00 DM
Exhibit Snacks/Juice	33.30 DM
Total – Orash Photo Workshop	1,273.80 DM

Vitomirice Photo Workshop

Participants

Twelve schoolchildren between the ages of 10 and 14 from Vitomirice (Pejë) participated. The ethnicity was 50% Albanian, 50% Bosniak and Roma. The gender was even between boys and girls.

One Albanian child spoke Bosniak, and one Bosniak spoke Albanian. The other Roma and Albanian children spoke only their own language. The two Albanian workshop leaders speak both languages and translated everything said during the work sessions into the other language.

Workshop structure

Starting on Monday, October 9, the children met on 8 occasions (on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays). Every session lasted 2 hours and included games for group cohesion, games to get the children thinking in photos and visual images and imagining and drawing photos.

Instruction in basic photography was given, including inserting and removing film, winding film, adjusting focus, aperture, etc., as well as correcting mistakes. The children first used manual cameras in small supervised groups, and later used disposable cameras unsupervised. The children took these cameras home over the

weekend to choose their own motifs and came back with their own choice of photographs.

Discussions were held about making good photos, choosing photo themes and their reasons for joining the photo workshops. The children were encouraged to think about why they take each photo and what they want to show and the techniques they would use.

Discussions about the photos once they were developed produced very interesting comments about what was good, what could be improved, etc.

The children also discussed what living and attending school in a mixed community was like, and gave their thoughts about improving life in a multi-ethnic society.

In all terms, the Vitomirice workshop was conducted in a similar fashion to that of Orash.

Exhibit

A photo exhibit will be held at Nënë Teresa Gallery from Tuesday, October 31, to Friday, November 3 to show a selection of the best photos taken during the workshop. On Saturday 4 November, the exhibit will be moved to the city center for an outdoor joint mural-photo exhibition. Children from Vitomirice and Roma and Albanian children who painted the mural will perform songs in different languages, including Albanian and Bosniak. Snacks and drinks will be provided to the participating children. The children will be transported from Vitomirice to Pejë and back on Saturday, November 4.

On October 25, the children mounted their photos on frames, and on Tuesday, October 31, they will put them up at the Nënë Teresa Gallery. The delay in the exhibition is due to the municipal elections (to be held October 28), forcing the exhibit to move to the following weekend.

Vitomirice Workshop Budget

Item	DM
Facilitators/Translators	300.00 DM
Development	465.00 DM
15 Disposable Cameras	225.00 DM
Driver and car/Villages	150.00 DM
Gas/Driver to exhibit*	40.00 DM
Expenses – Mounting photos, etc...	33.60 DM
Exhibit Snacks/Juice	12.50 DM
Total – Vitomirice Photo Workshop	1,226.10 DM

* Receipt missing pending transport of Vitomirice children to exhibit on Nov. 4.

Project Evaluation

There was no visible tension between the ethnic groups or any type of division. Children tended to sit next to others who spoke their language, with the two bilingual girls mixing with both groups. In small groups and games the children mixed and interacted well, given the language difference.

As the project progressed, they got to know each other better and made attempts to communicate in the other language.

More initiatives of this and other type are necessary and even urgent, as children of the age targeted in this project (10-16) have proved open to other ethnicities and had a positive response to this effort.

General Budget for Photography Workshops

Item	Receipt No.	DM
Facilitators/Translators	UNP15, UNP16	300.00 DM
17 Disposable Cameras & film development	UNP02	487.00 DM
Development and 2nd prints	UNP03	229.50 DM
Driver and car/Villages	UNP14	150.00 DM
Gas/Driver to exhibit	UNP07	40.00 DM
Expenses – Mounting photos, etc...	UNP01, UNP04	34.00 DM
Exhibit Snacks/Juice	UNP06, UNP08,	33.30 DM
Subtotal – Orash Photo Workshop		1,273.80 DM
Facilitators/Translators	UNP15, UNP16	300.00 DM
Development	UNP09, UNP11	465.00 DM
15 Disposable Cameras	UNP10	225.00 DM
Driver and car/Villages	UNP14	150.00 DM
Gas/Driver to exhibit*	*	40.00 DM
Expenses – Mounting photos, etc...	UNP12	33.60 DM
Exhibit Snacks/Juice	UNP13	12.50 DM
Subtotal – Vitomirice Photo Workshop		1,226.10 DM
Total Unicef Photography Workshops		2,499.90 DM

* Receipt missing pending transport of Vitomirice children to exhibit on Nov. 4.