



Past Performance and Experience

Center for Human Rights and Conflict Resolution (CHRCR) is an NGO that was established with the overall goals of: (1) **helping citizens of the Republic of Macedonia take active role in resolving seemingly intractable conflicts rooted in ethnic and other differences**; and (2) **promoting the concept of human rights and basic freedoms as essential part of global political, juridical and social transformation** that is going on in the country. In order to achieve these goals, CHRCR undertakes various activities in three main areas: human rights, conflict resolution and inter-ethnic relations. All activities in the area of inter-ethnic relations have an end aim to transform the perception of cultural/ethnic differences – from anticipating them as a source of competition which inevitably creates tensions and intolerance between different ethnic groups, to accepting them as a potential source of mutual growth through building relations of respect and interdependence.

CHRCR's activities are based on two assumptions. The first one **recognizes that education is a powerful tool that can be used for building bridges or misused for building walls** between the ethnic communities. **The second one perceives education as the only instrument that can provide systemic changes** in people's attitudes towards cultural/ethnic differences. That is the reason why CHRCR has chosen to work mostly in the field of education, focusing its efforts on developing educational programs for children from preschool to university level, training educators to implement them and writing manuals to support the implementation. Additionally, CHRCR as an organization and/or its experts have had notable experience in designing and conducting research projects and very often have provided consultations and expertise on inter-ethnic relations to local and international institutions.

CHRCR is not an association of activists, or an NGO that implements ready made programs or hires professionals to implement programs. **It is rather an expert organization with expertise that has been gained through continues creation and implementation of various activities aimed at improvement of interethnic relations in the Republic of Macedonia. Many of them have already been officialized within the education system and/or served as examples of best practeces nationwide.**

The Center for Human Rights and Conflict Resolution started to work as an NGO in January 2007. Before that, in was an entity within the Institute for Sociological, Political, and Juridical Research (ISPJR), University Ss. Cyril and Methodius, Skopje co-directed by Prof Violeta Petroska-Beshka and Prof. Mirjana Najchevska. The Center's activities were built upon the experience of the Ethnic Conflict Resolution Project (ECRP) which functioned and directed by Prof. Petroska-Beshka under the Faculty of Philosophy, University Ss. Cyril and Methodius,

Skopje. ECRP ended in 2001 since at that time (after the violent escalation of the conflict) its ethnically mixed structure and integrative activities were no longer welcome at the Faculty. However, its activities continued when ECRP team merged with the Center for Human Rights from ISPJR to establish the Center for Human Rights and Conflict Resolution (CHRCR). Since CHRCR within ISPJR (2001-2006) could not continue to get finances for its activities from donor organizations through ISPJR as a budgetary institution, CHRCR was registered in January 2007 as a local NGO and kept on with its projects and activities.

The Ethnic Conflict Resolution Project was launched in January 1994 with financial support from the Catholic Relief Services and Open Society Institute Macedonia, with the overall goal to help the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia take an active position towards the resolution of seemingly intractable conflicts rooted in ethnic and other differences. It was the first local center that organized conflict resolution trainings for ethnic Macedonian and ethnic Albanian educators and journalists with prominent trainers from the *International Center for Cooperation and Conflict Resolution*, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York (December 1994 and March 1996), the *Centre for Applied Studies in International Negotiations*, Geneva (May 1994 and March-May 1995) and the *Balkan Peace Project*, Cambridge, MA (June and September 1996). Later, ECRP started its cooperation with Search for Common Ground-Macedonia on several projects. Several of them have had big impact on education and acceptance of multicultural nature of the country and are very relevant to the IIEP goals and activities:

- ***Mosaic - bilingual (Macedonian-Albanian) groups in public kindergartens*** is the first and so far the only real model for integrated education in the country. It was launched in 1998 in three pilot kindergartens (in Skopje and Kumanovo), and was later spread in many others in ethnically mixed municipalities. ECRP was responsible for developing the teaching methodology, training teachers to implement the methodology and work in pairs using bilingual approach, as well as for supervising and providing professional support. The external evaluation of the effects showed that the project managed to: foster self-respect and respect for the *others*, build relationships of interdependence between kids from the two ethnic communities, developed their skills for constructive conflict resolution, and opened the possibility for learning the language of the other ethnic group.
- ***Our Neighbourhood*** – a children TV series (21 episodes) produced by Search for Common Ground, Common Ground Production, Washington DC, and Children’s Television Workshop, New York. The series addressed three primary areas of concern: (1) *Active tolerance building*, by stimulating children’s proactive interest in the communities that surround them (for instance, through exploring music, family celebrations and holidays, etc.); (2) *Inter-cultural literacy*, by offering children an opportunity to learn basic phrases in a number of the country’s languages; and (3) *Constructive conflict-resolution techniques*, by teaching children (through positive modeling) how to interpret conflicts positively and to approach the resolution of conflicts constructively. ECRP experts were included in the content team (providing help in meeting the overall goals of the series in each scenario) and the research team (exploring the impact the series had on the children) during 1999-2000.
- ***Appreciating Differences*** – joint extracurricular program intended for ethnically mixed groups of secondary-school students (grades 10-11) having Macedonian or Albanian as languages of instruction. The program was implemented (1997-2001) in secondary schools from Skopje, Tetovo and Kumanovo either as a series of extracurricular activities (two-hour

workshops carried out once a week during the entire school year), or as an intensive ten days summer-camp program. Main goals were to develop awareness about ethnic and gender stereotypes and prejudices and build mutual trust and relations of interdependence between members of the Albanian and Macedonian ethnic communities. Students themselves, with support and assistance of ECRP team initiated, organized and carried out joint activities (like parties, cultural, sport and recreation events) aimed at mobilizing their peers and school-mates to take active part in tolerance building. ECRP team was responsible for creating the program and implementing the activities with assistance and support of school psychologists and teachers. ECRP prepared a training manual, which, together with the experience gained in this project, was used in the later projects developed and run by CHRCCR (like *School of Tolerance*).

- ***Conflict Resolution Games*** – a whole year extracurricular program intended for fourth grade students from schools with Macedonian, Albanian or Turkish as languages of instruction. Through cooperative games, role-playing, small-groups discussions, creative problem solving, and simulations, educators challenged children to think critically about the nature of conflicts, the impact of perceptions, communication, and needs on conflicts, anger management, and other issues related to resolution of everyday conflicts. The program was implemented by school psychologists and pedagogues who were trained by the ECRP team to follow the specially prepared manual. The program was launched in 1995/96 in two pilot schools in Skopje. In the next four years around 70 schools (with more than 5000 participants) from different parts of Macedonia joined the program that was positively evaluated by external evaluators for having impact on children's behavior. The experience with teaching methodology and teacher training gained in this project was transferred to several CHRCCR projects (like *Same-Alike-Different*, *Life Skills Education*, *Multicultural Workshops*).

After the establishment of the ISPJR's Center for Human Rights and Conflict Resolution, the two former ECRP programs continued till 2004 with expanded scope. The *Conflict Resolution Games* included training of teachers by former program implementers (school psychologists and pedagogists) and the *Appreciating Differences* put more emphasis on empowering students from four mixed secondary-schools in Skopje, Kumanovo, Tetovo and Gostivar to take an active role in building relations of interdependence among their schoolmates from the Albanian and Macedonian classes. By initiating and undertaking joint activities of various kinds (e.g. peer education multicultural workshops, drama club, photography club, survey on inter-ethnic relations in their schools), program participants jointly produced brochures, conducted research and performed other multicultural activities.

In addition, ISPJR's Center for Human Rights and Conflict Resolution worked in close cooperation with the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Macedonia. It served as an expert organization in charge of various projects aimed at improvement of interethnic relations. The most relevant to the IIEP goals and activities are the following:

- ***School of Tolerance*** – a five year project (2003-08, funded by SIDA) in the Gostivar high-school in (with Macedonian, Albanian and Turkish as languages of instruction) aimed at developing a model for working in ethnically mixed secondary schools towards improvement of inter-ethnic relations among students and teaching staff. The model was based on the Social Identity Theory and the Contact Hypothesis – two theoretical models in social psychology that are commonly used to introduce changes in the interethnic relations in

societies that experience interethnic tensions. CHRCR team: (1) carried out seminars and workshops for students, teachers, school management and parents on combating ethnic prejudices and raising awareness for integrated education and students' democratic participation; (2) trained and supported teachers to conduct joint extracurricular activities in mixed teams for mixed groups of students; and (3) supported students' projects for improvement of interethnic relations in the community. 42 teachers were in charge of 34 extracurricular activities during a period of five school years and over 500 students participated in the extracurricular activities. Some of them took part in more than one school year and/or in more than one activity. A lot of joint products and materials were produced by students and the project team that can be used as samples for the IIEP activities. The experience with this project was crucial for the ECRP further work on integrated education.

- ***Same, Alike, Different*** – bilingual extracurricular program (2002-2005) for ethnically mixed groups of primary school students aimed at strengthening positive self-esteem, developing contacts with children from the *other* ethnic group and combating negative ethnic stereotypes. The groups were formed by splitting ethnically homogeneous (Albanian and Macedonian) classes (grade 4) in two sub-groups and combining them in bilingual groups. Regular whole year sessions (once a week) included joint workshops as well as joint social events intended to create intellectual, emotional, and social atmosphere that encouraged communication between Macedonian and Albanian children. 130-150 children from schools from Skopje and Tetovo per school year participated in the program. Answers to a questionnaire applied to children's parents and the results of the pre-test/post-test implementation of instruments for measuring ethnic stereotypes indicated that the program had significant impact on inter-ethnic relations between children. The experience gained in this program was of major importance for the later creation of the multicultural activities with UNICEF and BDE.
- ***Human Right Schools*** – ten-day camps for ethnically mixed groups of secondary-school students intended to offer a possibility to gain knowledge and understanding about human rights and protection mechanisms, the interethnic understanding and peaceful conflict resolution. CHRCR expert team developed the program for the camp and was in charge of conducting 14 camps (2002-06) with separate groups consisting of Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish and Roma students from various regions of Macedonia. Human Rights Schools were also designed to act as a forum for dialogue of young people belonging to different ethnicities, where they could freely discuss and cooperate. The experience gained in this project served in developing workshops for life skills education as well as methodology for working with ethnically diverse groups of secondary-school students on out-of-school activities.
- ***Community development through Improvement of Interethnic Relations*** – a community based program intended for providing mechanisms for improvement of Macedonian-Albanian interethnic relations and reconciliation on municipality, regional and national level. The project worked with representatives from three municipalities that were most affected by the armed conflict of 2001 (Ljuboten/Ljubanci, Lipkovo and Arachinovo) with main objectives to establish inter-village (or inter-ethnic) councils composed of the most influential representatives from the target villages, deliver conflict resolution trainings through joint workshops and provide forum for dialog and discussion on issues of mutual interests. The project took place in 2003-04 and was implemented in cooperation with European Perspective with financial support from the European Agency for Reconstruction. The project included

school principles (as very respected representatives from the target villages) and established bonds between them and the respective local governments while looking for a solution for common problems. This experience is very important for development and implementation of the community based activities of the IIEP.

ISPJR's Center for Human Rights and Conflict Resolution worked on several projects with history teachers on teaching history in ethnically divided Macedonia. These experiences are very important for creating conditions for cooperation between Macedonian and Albanian teachers within IIEP:

- ***Understanding Current History*** (2001-2002, funded by the United States Institute of Peace, Washington, DC)¹ gathered Albanian and Macedonian history teachers from ethnically mixed secondary schools from around the country very soon after the signing of the Ohrid Framework Agreement to discuss the different perspectives of the causes and consequences of the violent conflict of 2001. Teachers went through a series of seminars where they had the opportunity to also discuss the influence of teaching history on the reconciliation processes in the country.
- ***Armed Conflict on the Territory of the Republic of Macedonia in 2001*** (2004, funded by EU mission in Skopje) was a continuation of the *Understanding Current History* project. It brought together previously trained Macedonian and Albanian secondary-school history teachers and facilitated their writing of the Albanian and Macedonian versions of the causes and consequences of the violent conflict of 2001 that were published in a joint booklet living space for students to look for similarities and differences in the two perspectives.
- ***Narratives in Our Histories*** (2005-06, grant from the United States Institute of Peace-USIP) engaged a selected group of previously trained Macedonian and Albanian history teachers to work on the Macedonian and Albanian ethnic narratives about the historical events that had major influence on the development of the ethnic identity of two communities (1. Religions in the Ottoman Empire; 2. Division of the Macedonian/Albanian Ethnic Territory 1878-1919; and Albanians/Macedonians in the Second World War). These narratives had evolved and subsisted in parallel to each other, and instead of becoming part of their common, united development, they had reinforced the existing parallelism and encouraged negative stereotypes and prejudices towards each other. The project developed alternative teaching materials for students and a manual for history teachers on how to use the materials with their students in a way that would emphasize the common roots and perspectives.

After the Center for Human Rights and Conflict Resolution turned into an NGO (January 2007), it continued with the *School of Tolerance* project in Gostivar and began its cooperation with UNICEF and USAID on projects aimed at improvement of inter-ethnic relations in the country:

- ***Child Friendly School (CFS)*** model that was first introduced in Macedonia through the work of a team of academics gathered around Prof. Petroska-Beshka on developing CFS standards and indicators and conducting a baseline study in 2006 was undertaken by CHRCR experts. For the next two years (2007-2008) they were engaged by UNICEF through the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) to introduce changes first in five and

¹ A special report on the project was published in Feb. 2004 by United States Institute of Peace and can be found on: <http://www.usip.org/publications/macedonia-understanding-history-preventing-future-conflict>

later in ten pilot schools following the CFS model. In addition to training teachers to implement the activities for school-based change and monitoring their implementation, CHRCCR team developed a model for school self-evaluation based on teachers-students-parents participation. During that time, CHRCCR experts were also engaged in reviewing the national framework and subject curricula for the nine-year primary education according to the CFS standards, especially with regard to their multicultural approach and gender sensitivity.

- From 2009 the CFS project was officially located at CHRCCR firstly as a project untitled *Technical Assistance to the Bureau for Education Development for Implementation of Child-Friendly School Initiative*. CHRCCR team continued with initiating and supporting school-based changes with regard to the CFS standards related to all six dimensions of the CFS model (inclusiveness, effectiveness, health/safety, gender sensitivity, participation and multiculturalism/child rights) in the 10 pilot schools, but also introduced life skills education in primary schools on national level. CHRCCR experts assisted BDE advisors in developing the national curriculum for **life skills education**, prepared three manuals, for three age circles (published by BDE), with workshops based on experiential learning through interactive and innovative teaching methodology. Together with the BDE advisors, CHRCCR experts trained mentor-teachers for implementing the life skills education in their schools.
- From 2010 the CHRCCR continued to run the CFS project with focus narrowed to multiculturalism and children's participation (***Child Friendly School with Focus on Multiculturalism and Participation***). The major objectives are to first develop and implement a model for joint (bilingual) multicultural workshops as extracurricular activities and a model for democratic participation of students through practicing democracy in pilot primary and secondary schools from ethnically mixed municipalities and then to scale it up to the other schools in Kumanovo, Kichevo and Struga. Based on the implementation experience with school teachers and included NGOs, trained by the CHRCCR team, CHRCCR experts developed two manuals with multicultural workshops (one for primary and one for secondary education). The evaluation based on comparison of pre/post test results and/or experimental/control group results conducted in three pilot proved that the multicultural workshops program had impact on students' ethnic stereotypes and prejudices. Three conferences with school principals, teachers and municipal officials were held and joint strategies were developed on how to pair schools from the three municipalities in order to expend the multicultural workshops out of pilot schools. CHRCCR team will continue with training teachers and providing support for implementation of multicultural workshops in all schools in the three included municipalities.
- In 2013, with a grant from Columbia University, CHRCCR carried out the project ***The Burden of the Past: Teaching Macedonia 1944-1991***. A group of historians and related experts (ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians) developed: (1) curriculum on teaching history on Macedonia's ex-Yugoslav past (grade 9 in primary education) that highlights its legacy for the socio-political context of current Macedonia and (2) a model history lesson on "Skopje catastrophic earthquake in 1963" (as part of the proposed curriculum) that offers and promotes a contemporary multi-perspective approach to developing history curriculum and writing history lessons.

- From the beginning of 2012 (until the end of 2015) CHRCCR serves as a partner organization to the Macedonian Center for Civic Education in the implementation of the ***USAID Project on Interethnic Integration in Education***. It provides expertise for building capacities of the key educational institutions to introduce interethnic integration at school level (all primary and secondary schools) by training master trainers and mentors and developing modules and manuals for training of trainers and implementing activities. Within this project, CHRCCR is in charge of establishing model schools for interethnic integration and developing manuals in support of the implementation of interethnic integration. It is also responsible for monitoring and evaluation of the overall project activities.
- From March 2014 (until June 2015), in cooperation with UNICEF and the British Embassy, CHRCCR implements the project on ***Diversity in Early Child Development***. Within the project, CHRCCR has proposed improvements in the official Early Child Development curriculum and raised awareness in pre-school teachers from all public kindergartens through the country for respecting diversity and multiculturalism. CHRCCR produced a manual with workshops for pre-school kids that promote respect for diversity and multiculturalism and is in charge of supporting its implementation in ten pilot kindergartens from different municipalities.

Within the same project, CHRCCR team continued with the activities around the CFS framework in the context of education reform. A manual for school self-evaluation was prepared by CHRCCR and published by BDE, and a Manual for implementation of school-based changes according to the CFS standards and indicators is still in the process of preparation. The same CHRCCR experts who wrote the manuals for life skills education for primary schools are currently working on a manual for life skills education at secondary-school level to be published by BDE.

- CHRCCR inherited the ***Child Friendly Municipalities*** project that started under ISPJR's CHRCCR in 2006 and it is still in progress. The project has been aiming at establishing child rights commissions as an essential part of the further improvement of the decentralization process and implementation of the idea for child friendly school in the system of local self government. After being exposed to intensive training for municipal capacity building, the eleven included municipalities from all around the country have accepted the child rights based education as their priority and started building strategies to incorporate it into their action plans and use specially developed indicators to perform situation analysis. The experience gained with this project could be used for linking the schools to the community and establishing the basis for using the decentralization process for improvement of education at local level.
- In 2009, CHRCCR conducted an initial study to determine the capacities of the Macedonia's education system to promote and ensure respect, tolerance and acceptance and examine the perceptions and the level of communication between students, parents, and teachers from the Macedonian and Albanian ethnic communities living in Macedonia. The study analyzed the government programs and the legal and policy framework, the conceptual framework and national curricula for primary education, textbooks that were in use in primary education; and the statistical data on the existing ethnic/language division in the schools. The study also included field research carried out in primary and secondary schools from Kumanovo, Kichevo and Struga and its findings came from a quantitative part (based on questionnaires administered to students and teachers) as well as a qualitative part (based on interviews with

school management and focus groups with students, teachers and parents). The aim of the field research was to obtain evidence on: the interaction and communication between Albanian and Macedonian students in and out of mixed schools; the tendency for ethnic separation and its effects on inter-ethnic communication and cooperation; and the scope and efficiency of the existing mechanisms of communication and coordination focused on democratic participation, leadership and management and conflict resolution in schools and municipalities. The results were published by UNICEF in a publication untitled ***Multiculturalism and Interethnic Relations in Education***. The study preceded the appearance of the government strategy for integrated education and most of the conclusions and recommendations that appeared in the study overlap with those that are part of the strategy.

Two of the other CHRCR activities should be mentioned additionally:

- CHRCR organized the ***Evaluation Training for USAID Macedonia counterparts/ implementing partners/USAID staff*** (Oct. 2008 – April 2009) aimed at enhancing Macedonia's overall capacity to monitor and evaluate programs in the Education, Democracy & Governance and Economic Growth sectors. CHRCR experts with academic proper background and extensive experience as external evaluators on projects/programs held a training workshop that offered theoretical knowledge on monitoring and evaluation; provided continuous feedback and support to participants while conducting evaluation; and certified the participants as evaluators after reviewing the evaluation reports and administering a certification test. This event proves that CHRCR has the expertise and the organization potentials to take the responsibility of performing monitoring and evaluation.
- CHRCR cooperated with the Institute for Sociological, Political and Juridical Research on a UNDP funded Project on ***Enhancing Inter-Ethnic Community Dialogue and Collaboration*** (2011-2012). CHRCR developed strategy for addressing disputes with an ethnic dimension, designed a protocol for promoting mediation as an alternative system for dispute resolution that supports multiethnic dialog and cooperation on local and national level, and trained professional mediators to resolve disputes/conflicts with ethnic dimension.