WORLD LEADERSHIP ALLIANCE
CLUB DE MADRID

The Shared Societies Project:
Leadership for Dialogue, Diversity and Social Cohesion

Building a world safe for difference

Replicable example of practice

Commitment II

Create opportunities for minorities and marginalized groups and communities to be consulted about their needs and their perception of the responsiveness of state and community structures to meet those needs.

Suggested Approaches:

- Encourage identity groups to create representative bodies with which government and other identity groups can dialogue to explore and understand issues and concerns that affect those groups.
- Create systems of community meetings that allow community members to express their views and air their grievances

Commitment VI

Ensure that physical environments create opportunities for, rather than discourage, social interaction.

Suggested Approaches:

- Work with planners, architects and academics to identify how our physical environment impacts on social cohesion and raise awareness of this knowledge
- Require local authorities and planning bodies to review the existing environment, identifying obstacles to social cohesion and take steps to remove those obstacles or minimize their negative impact.

Commitment IX

Promote respect, understanding and appreciation of cultural, religious and ethnic diversity and support local communities in exploring their identity, sharing their experiences with other identity groups and working together with those groups on common concerns.

Suggested Approaches:

- Provide resources for the creation of local community organizations and for their activities to promote self awareness within communities and engagement with other communities.
- Create or ensure the creation of networks of local community organizations to engage with each other and encourage wider involvement in intercommunity activities.

- Provide resources for the development of local cultural infrastructure and activities which reflect and respect the different cultural backgrounds of members of the community.
- Encourage cultural activities that explore issues of concern about relationships between different identity groups.
- Create opportunities for the expression of the diversity of communities in society including the recognition of special days and specific symbols that are meaningful to those communities.
- Develop and promote the implementation of awareness programmes on the nature of racism and sectarianism and how they can be combated at an individual and group level throughout all levels of society.
- Establish and support training programmes to train skilled community facilitators to work with local communities in establishing local groups and organisations and in exploring issues of cultural identity and diversity.

Commitment X

Take steps to reduce tensions and hostility between communities and ensure members of all communities are protected from abuse, intimidation and violence.

Suggested Approaches:

- Promote public awareness of the damage to individuals and the whole society as a result of intercommunity conflict and encourage the community to be vigilant in identifying and challenging situations that might lead to tension.
- Establish mechanisms at local community levels to improve communication among leaders from each community and equip them with the resources and skills to be able to neutralize and resolve critical situations before they escalate.
- Develop early warning systems to monitor inter-community relations and identify where preventive action is required.

Servicio de Dinamización (Dinamization of Public Spaces Service)

Country: Spain

Background

- The increase of migration since the Millennium has changed the demographic profile of Madrid bringing immigrants into close contact with settled residents.
- The expectations of different groups of residents have led to tensions between settled and immigrant communities.
- One of the principal issues is related to the use of public spaces (Parks, plazas, etc.). There is a strong tradition in the culture of Latin American communities to meet and enjoy sports and recreational activities in public places, especially during public holidays.

- The noise and litter that results may annoy or frighten others and discourage them from feeling free to use these spaces
- Sometimes there are also tensions between different immigrant groups
- Due to this reality, the need emerged for facilitation of active integration and cohabitation with flexible and coordinated responses to unanticipated social situations.
- For eleven years there had been a social and cultural mediation service within social services out of which *Servicio de Dinamización* emerged because it was recognised that many of the problems were not so much related to the delivery of services as interaction in the streets and public spaces.

Goals

- Create activities and programs geared towards furthering successful cohabitation, strengthening social relations and mutual respect between cultures
- Help residents to understand the impact of their behaviours on others and encouraging the development of an agreed use of public spaces based on respect for other residents and for municipal regulations.
- Bring together neighbours, and establish the necessary mechanism to resolve disputes and bring about optimal cultural cohabitation in parks and other public spaces.
- Where a local compromise cannot be achieved to make decisions which will manage the tensions.
- Increase awareness and sensitivity by education in the values of tolerance, respect
- Create opportunities for all residents of Madrid to meet regardless of their origins and engage in dialogue about the issues that affect them. Those actions will contribute to avoiding racist and xenophobic attitudes.

Method

- The service stated in 2009.
- Teams of workers, called “integrators of public spaces”, were created, based in all 21 districts of the city.
- There are a total of 51 team members with education in interculturalism, social dynamics and community intervention. There are also 4 co-ordinators and one administrator. The staff is made up of people from 21 nationalities.
- The team works with the professionals providing public services (social services, educators, neighbourhood workers, police, etc.) and also with local

councillors to identify needs and problem situations where they can be of help. They carry out a continual co-habitation analysis.

- The teams also coordinate with other services to ensure their work is consistent with district plans and programs.
- For the implementation of their work, they use a methodology of intervention based on analysis, knowledge and assessment of the district and on public participation
- The team members visit local areas where there are tensions and meet those with a stake in the community and work with them to find a solution.
- Their presence shows that they are willing to listen and want to be part of a process to end the tensions and at the same time they show that they believe that everyone can use the space without interfering with each other's enjoyment.
- The problems which cause tensions include lack of local community organisation and networks between organisations, misunderstanding, and prejudice.
- The team tries to address these problems by encouraging the creation of groups to represent the communities in the area because they believe that it is important that there is a group to convey the demands of each community to the others. They offer training courses in community organization.
- They create spaces for informal exchange between people and co-ordinate the exchange of contact details, so that residents can be in touch with each other when they see a problem emerging.
- The teams also promote activities which will allow different residents to get to know each other and take away prejudices.
- They encourage the creation of common rules for the use of public spaces which are agreed and signed and posted up in public. These cover things like timing of events, alcohol consumption, cleaning up afterwards, etc.
- The teams monitor the implementation of agreements because they say that no procedure ever ends and new problems may arise when, for example, a new group arrives.
- The service is available 7 days a week.
- It is not possible to resolve every complaint and on occasions the Municipality has had to close off some areas and make them unavailable for public use

Impact

- The teams have been able to defuse many situations and build more understanding between immigrant and long term residents
- The teams are well respected both by political leaders, public services and local communities.

Enabling Conditions

- *Servicio de Dinamización* was established by Madrid City Council who funds an NGO to implement the programme.
- The service has evolved, growing out of the earlier mediation service in social services which led to the creation of park animators which in turn became the current much bigger programme which operates throughout the city
- Local councillors and policy are happy to involve the teams because many problems can only be solved by dialogue facilitated by people who know the cultures of the people involved.
- Since the first Integration Plan of Madrid, the need for co-ordinated actions was recognised, bringing together knowledge of current realities with the reception and integration of vulnerable people.
- While there is little evidence of discrimination and xenophobia there is concern that it might develop and therefore there is support for this programme as it challenges intercultural hostility in order to consolidate its primary objective of intercultural cohabitation.

Contact / References for further information

Marta Segovia (Coordinator), tlf +34 91.530.04.29, HTUmarta.segovia@cear.esUTTHT