GENERAL BACKGROUND

In Casablanca, Morocco's largest city, over 500,000 residents live in haphazardly built homes, which are concentrated in the Hay Mohammadi district. Failure to socially and economically integrate the urban poor has led to their stigmatization by other classes, causing a vicious cycle of poverty and further discrimination. This proposal aims to break this cycle by generating local leadership through access to human rights education. While many Moroccan NGOs have worked to strengthen civil society through human rights initiatives, there is a lacuna of localized development initiatives focused on empowering youth as both local and global citizens through human rights education. A recent evaluation of Casablanca’s Hay Mohammadi school district by the Morocco Geneva Alliance for Human Rights (ACPDH-Maroc), found that the school system occupies a traditional role of imparting basic knowledge, but lacks the cultural infrastructure and curriculum content necessary for generating positive societal values and leadership skills among its students.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This proposal aims to create a human rights cultural center in collaboration with ACPDH-Maroc, the Hay Mohammadi Ministry of Education, and Lewis & Clark student volunteers. The target population will be youth between the ages of 7-13, who are at a critical age for developing attitudes of tolerance and understanding. The human rights cultural center's infrastructure will include a functioning classroom, computer lab, and library with human rights related materials in order to provide a safe space for human rights workshops, guest lecturers, and drop-in supplemental education. This project has six short-term goals: (1) to establish a human rights cultural center in Hay Mohammadi, (2) to develop a human rights curriculum for potential use in Moroccan schools, (3) to train 40 teachers in human rights curriculum integration, (4) to empower 80 youth through human rights education workshops, (5) to provide practical supplemental education with a focus on computer and foreign language skills, (6) to foster cross-cultural understanding between Moroccan and American students through the people-to-people approach.

ACHIEVING PROJECTED SHORT-TERM GOALS

Partnerships

The achievement of the projected short-term goals is made possible by close partnerships and guidance from ACPDH-Maroc, the Hay Mohammadi Ministry of Education, and Dr. Oren Kosansky. Dr. Oren Kosansky, who has extensive research experience in Morocco, will be located in Casablanca during the summer of 2011 and has agreed to serve as a project adviser. In addition, the Hay Mohammadi Ministry of Education has agreed to provide the facilities for the creation of the human rights cultural center within the Hay Mohammadi Ministry of Education's educational complex. First, funds from the 100 Projects for Peace grant will be used to build the necessary infrastructure, with the manpower of Lewis & Clark Student volunteers and local volunteers where possible, which will generate a sense of local ownership. ACPDH-Maroc has agreed to work with the Ministry of Education to send letters to principals within the Hay Mohammadi school district, asking them to recommend promising educators and students, with an even ratio of genders, to participate in workshops at the cultural center during the summer. ACPDH-Maroc has also agreed to provide five human rights education facilitators and three workshop facilitators to train Lewis & Clark student volunteers in workshop facilitation, content development, and effective tutoring methods for the cultural center's workshops and drop-in hours. Throughout the summer, Lewis & Clark students will work with the ACPDH-Maroc staff to train a total of 40 teachers and 80 students. In order for human rights education to be sustainable, it must fit the true needs of the local population. Therefore, the local population must define the curriculum in order to generate a sense of local ownership. Lewis & Clark student volunteers will design the first half of the workshop content with guidance from the ACPDH-Maroc staff, who have vast experience evaluating the educational needs within the Hay Mohammadi school district. The second half of the curriculum will be designed throughout the summer based on feedback from students and educators about their own perceptions of critical issues affecting their lives and possible solutions.

Volunteerism

18 Lewis & Clark volunteers have been accepted on a rolling basis to participate in this peacebuilding initiative. Student volunteers have generously agreed to fund their own participation in order to maximize the impact of available funds on the ground. Although this project is fully functional with one Lewis & Clark student, the value of incorporating additional Lewis & Clark volunteers is twofold. First, building positive relationships between American and Moroccan students, which generate cross-cultural understanding, disempower negative stereotypes emerging from a number if factors, including a lack of exposure to the “other”, and recent misguided media emphasis on an East-West divide. Student volunteers aim to bridge this divide through the relationships they build across borders. Second, the incorporation of student volunteers aims to generate an ethos of volunteerism and giving back among Lewis & Clark students. Although we may not be able to eradicate all of the world’s inequalities, it is essential that we recognize our own positions of privilege and utilize them to empower the disempowered. Lewis & Clark students are asked to do precisely this by utilizing their own foreign language skills, and liberal arts education to provide one-on-one tutoring for Moroccan youth, help facilitate human rights workshops, and serve as mentors at the cultural center.

TIME FRAME:
Starting in mid-May and extendable for up to one month.

Week 1: Lewis & Clark student volunteers meet ACPDH-Maroc staff. The Hay Mohammadi Ministry of Education sends recruitment letters to principals. Lewis & Clark student volunteers and contractors work on creating the infrastructure of the cultural center, which includes electrical wiring for computers, building bookshelves, floor repair, and painting.

Week 2: ACPDH-Maroc staff trains Lewis & Clark student volunteers, and works collaboratively with them on workshop content development. The cultural center opens for drop-in use.

Weeks 3-11: 10 students attend a weeklong workshop every week. 10 teachers attend a two-week long workshop every two weeks. Lewis & Clark students continue to tutor Moroccan students in English, French, and computer skills during drop-in hours.

TRANSLATING SHORT-TERM GOALS INTO LONG-TERM GOALS

After the summer, ACPDH-Maroc has agreed to continue to staff the cultural center and provide workshops on a smaller scale. Ideally, Lewis & Clark students studying abroad in Morocco, Senegal, France, and elsewhere will return to Casablanca every summer to facilitate workshops, tutor Moroccan youth, and engage in cross-cultural exchange over the summer months. The project’s partnerships provide sustainability, allowing not only short-term goals, but also long-term goals to be fulfilled. The project has 6 long-term goals: (1) to generate a culture of human rights and peace among Hay Mohammadi’s youth, (2) to further economically and socially integrate the population through skills that increase access to higher education and employment, (3) to implement human rights curriculum in the Hay Mohammadi school district, (4) to aid Morocco’s progress in reaching the Millennium Development goals related to universal literacy and gender equality.

INSPIRING CHANGE AT HOME:

Follow-on Projects: Student volunteers will be asked to develop follow-on projects that promote cross-cultural understanding and human rights education. They will be expected to partner with a professor, student organization, or office at Lewis & Clark College in order to develop a project with guidance that connects their summer experience to educational and community initiatives on-campus. Student volunteers will then be asked to present these projects to the greater Lewis & Clark community upon their return in order to inspire other Lewis & Clark students to pursue their own peace initiatives.

Internships: Students will work closely with ACPDH-Maroc’s President, 5 professional human rights educational facilitators, and three professional workshop facilitators over the summer months, allowing them to gain practical experience in human rights related NGO work, international education, and working in a cross-cultural environment.

Video Blogging: Student volunteers will utilize weekly video blogging as a pedagogical tool to engage the greater Lewis & Clark community, and students’ respective communities, in a discussion of their experiences. Viewers will be able to post questions, which student volunteers will attempt to answer with subsequent blog submissions.

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