

ANTI-DISCRIMINATION AWARENESS-RAISING CAMPAIGN WITHIN THE POSITIVE IMAGES PROJECT RE-GRANT

March 26, 2011

BULGARIAN RED CROSS

NARRATIVE REPORT

Venue

The campaign took place on Saturday, March 26, 2011. Saturday was selected as an appropriate day by the facilitators of the project as there are more people on the streets than during the weekdays and hence we will have the chance to reach more people.

The campaign was carried out at 4 posts in the center of Sofia.

3 of the posts were outside posts:

- in the green space in front of the National Theater
- in front of one of the biggest churches St. Nedelya, which is surrounded by a square
- the subway in front of the Sofia University where there is an Underground exit and many shops

The locations were selected on the basis of number of people passing through. All of them were at very central places where either many people pass or walk around.

1 of the posts was in inside post. It was in one of the shopping malls in Sofia, the most central one which is almost downtown and is much visited.

Goals

The goal of the campaign was to raise awareness among the general population about refugees and migrants in Bulgaria, mostly about where they come from and why are they here, and thus to contribute to nurturing tolerant attitude to them and to decrease discrimination.

Participants

Participants were the facilitators of workshops and some of the participants in the workshops who were most interested in the project and wished to join. Also there were many volunteers of the Sofia City branch youth organization who did not participate in the project, but as this was a campaign of the Sofia City branch youth organization they joined and were instructed on what to do on the posts.

Preparation

The preparation of the campaign started almost a month before the day of the event and was done in 4 general meetings of the facilitators and many individual visits of facilitators to the office of the BRC Youth department.

On these meetings the facilitators decided how to conduct the campaign, how many posts to have and where.

They brainstormed for ideas and developed a pool of games from which they were to choose which games would be used on each posts.

It was decided that each post will have a team leader. Each leader was responsible to organize the post – to select which games to include from the pool of games the facilitators developed together, to prepare materials, to tell the Social City branch youth coordinator who many additional volunteer he/she will need to be on the post, etc.

The leaders prepared everything they need on the post or told the project officer what they need or the youth coordinator of Sofia who supported them.

Permission from the Municipality was granted and the cooperation with the shopping mall achieved.

Three days before the campaign many of the facilitators stayed in the office of the BRC youth department for hours to prepare materials, to draw crosswords, write press release to the media, communicated with the Refugee and Migrant Services regarding information to be told to media and citizens, etc. Practically the volunteers prepared the whole campaign by themselves with only administrative support and coaching by the project officer and one of the more experienced volunteers of the Sofia City branch who got involved in the project slightly later in its course (in January).

Description

The 3 outside posts were set up close to 2 pm. Two of them were taken off at 4 pm. and moved to the shopping mall – both people and materials. The third outside post, as it enjoyed the interest of many people and had the chance to reach many, stayed more, until about 5 pm. when it was also taken to the shopping mall.

Post at the National Theater

“In general the post did very well. There was interest from the people who were passing or just walking around in the park of the National Theater. The only problem we encountered was that we could not start exactly on time and many of the volunteers were forced to wait a bit, but still, we had a positive attitude. However, this gave a little more time for explanations about the project to those

who have not been involved in it so far. There was bit of a hustle for a very short while during the setting up of the tent for the post, but then everyone found their place and all was well.

The activities were the following:

- A questionnaire “What Do You Know about Refugees?”
- Crossword “Positive Images” with words related to the refugee topic
- Collecting positive messages in a box for the refugees and migrants in Bulgaria
- Photos with carton dolls wearing traditional clothes from Palestine, Morocco and Syria
- Photos with a white board of people who were asked to write what they would take if they had to leave their home now and become refugees
- Fundraising for the children in the day-care center of the State Agency for Refugees
- A map “The Path of a Refugee” were people were asked to try to identify the migration trends – from which to which countries migration happens mostly and in particular from which countries people come to Bulgaria as refugees and migrants
- A game “Famous Refugees” – carton board on which there are notes with negative labels typical for labeling refugees and migrants, under the labels stood famous people who have been refugees at a certain point in their life and who have made a contribution (eg. Einstein, Milos Forman, Vladimir Nabokov, etc.)
- Handing out stickers
- Post cards, made by refugee children, specially for the campaign

There were lots of volunteers at the post (about 10 – 15 additional to the facilitators) many of them already involved in the project as participants in workshops. All of them got some task.

One of the most successful activities was collecting positive messages, taking photos with the white board and the crossword.

There are a number of filled questionnaires.

According to the opinion of the volunteers who took part in the campaign, there were people with various attitudes to refugees – from very positive to extremely negative.

A good thing for the post was the presence of Peter Chikoi, an immigrant from Zambia, who participated also at an earlier stage of the project, attending two of the workshops (of different couples of facilitators).

In general the post did very well, successful and positive. The warm weather and the good mood of the volunteers contributed to that as well.”¹

Post at the Chirch “St. Nedelya”

¹ The whole description is a quote of the short written feedback the leader of the post (Iana Doncheva) sent to me. On several occasions I added some additional description. Ana Izvorska.

“The work done at the post was great. The volunteers were very active and enthusiastic. There were some people but not a lot. Those who got themselves involved had a positive attitude and were interested in the campaign. There were others, who did not agree entirely with the campaign and our overall work on this project. This fact disappointed me to a certain extent, but I guess this is normal.

People were less interested in the crossword, unfortunately. Only two words were filled in. Most of the people were just passing by and were in a hurry and could not take the time to fill it in. The most liked activities were drawing and filling in the questionnaires. There were a lot of drawings at the games of associations with “Positive Images” and white board, regarding the things people would take with them if they had to leave the country now. The Palestinian dress on the carton doll was definitely attracting the attention of the people. Those interested were at different ages – from teenagers to old people. It was incredibly interesting to communicate on this topic with so many people who have so many different opinions and are at different ages. All young people had a positive attitude to refugees and migrants.

The challenges we faced and had to deal with were the “flying” tent (because of the wind), which we tried to make stand still and some of the volunteers were holding it during most of the time. This was limiting. The paper materials were also flying around.

However, overall I am satisfied by the campaign and the positive images we saw and met. Now I cannot wait for us to start working on the film.”²

Post at the passageway under the Sofia University

“At the post in the passageway under the Sofia University there were 9 volunteers and the campaign took place between 2.30 pm and 4.30 pm.

The campaign at the Sofia University post had as a central activity the questionnaire, aiming to discover the extent of awareness regarding refugees and migrants, the interest in the issue and the attitudes to refugees and migrants. People’s responses were quite controversial and as a whole the people know very little on this topic. They also feel that their awareness and information or lack of them will in no way affect the situation of refugees and migrants.

There were people who were honestly concerned about immigrants and refugees and those were the people who were most informed about the problem than those who did not want to spare from their time.

The tags that read “Welcome!” which were written in different languages as well as the handouts and the stickers were attracting attention. As a whole however, it was a bit difficult to attract a lot of attention as people were in a hurry.

² The whole description is a quote of the short written feedback the leader of the post (Marta Tomova) sent to me. Ana Izvorska.

The costumes (carton made dolls dressed in traditional clothes) and the crossword also attracted people who had already stopped at the post. The ones who were most interested were the young people, both young adults and teenagers.

The volunteers were very active. Although they received some refusals from people who did not want to be asked questions, they continued with a smile to approach people to fill in the questionnaire, to ask them to do the crossword and to give them handouts.

One media, a TV channel, was interested in the campaign. The leader of the post gave an interview for the TV, then the journalists also got involved in the activities and gave their positive message in the box.

The post concluded its work successfully, everything was moved to the Mall of Sofia, some of the volunteers went there to help there.”³

Post in the shopping mall Mall of Sofia

“The post in the shopping mall was planned to start last, at 4 pm (for comparison the outside posts started at 2 pm). The positive side of that was that there were many volunteers and more games than on the rest of the posts. There were the following activities:

- Collecting positive messages in a box for the refugees and migrants in Bulgaria
- Photos with a white board of people who were asked to write what they would take if they had to leave their home now and become refugees
- Crossword “Positive Images” with words related to the refugee topic
- Photos with carton dolls wearing traditional clothes from Palestine, Morocco and Syria
- Mr. Lion, the symbol of BRCY, who was immensely attracted the attention of the visitors of the shopping mall, especially the children and while the children were playing with Mr. Lion the volunteers could talk to the parents
- A questionnaire “What Do You Know about Refugees?”
- A game “Famous Refugees” – carton board on which there are notes with negative labels typical for labeling refugees and migrants, under the labels stood famous people who have been refugees at a certain point in their life and who have made a contribution (eg. Einstein, Milos Forman, Vladimir Nabokov, etc.)
- Information leaflets about refugees, taken from the Refugees and Migrant Services of the BRC
- Post cards, made by refugee children, specially for the campaign
- Handing out stickers

The campaign went well and the volunteers were occupied with various games. Many people who were visiting the mall were reached. They filled in questionnaires. Mr. Lion was attracting the

³ *The whole description is a quote of the short written feedback on of the facilitators at the post (Hristina Kamenova) sent to me. Ana Izvorska.*

attention of many people and made them stop and listen to what the volunteers had to say to them or at the post.

Something that impressed us very much was that many young people stopped at the post, mainly many students. They participated in the activities. Some people stopped and started asking us why are we in the shopping mall, what are we doing and what is the campaign for. Some of them did not take part in the games but were interested in the topic when asking the volunteers many questions.

The number of people to just pass by and not stop was very little.”⁴

Results

106 people were reached with the questionnaires and were interviewed. Please find attached short analysis of the questionnaires.

An estimated 800 people were reached during the campaign. The posts were out for a short time but this was the first warm spring Saturday and there were many people out on the streets and in the parks. In the shopping mall, there are always many people as this is one of the most central shopping malls unlike many others which are in the margins of the city.

Challenges

The only challenge that we faced was a very unexpected thing – the wind. It was a warm but rather windy day due to which it took more time to position the tents and to make them stay still.

Conclusion

The campaign in the estimation of everyone who was involved in its organization and implementation went very good, it was well organized and reached as many people as it was possible. The facilitators dedicated quite some time and effort to create the materials for the posts as a result of which they made the campaign interesting enough for people to stop by the posts and participate in the games.

Attachments:

Attachment 1 - Questionnaires analysis⁵

Attachment 2 - Positive messages from the boxes

⁴ *The whole description is a quote of the short written feedback the leader of the post (Theodora Ruskovska) sent to me. Ana Izvorska.*

⁵ *The analysis of the questionnaires is entirely made by two facilitators.*