Global Youth Voices

Engaging Bedouin Youth in Health Promotion in the Middle East

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study evaluated the six-phase Global Youth Voices model (EIPARS) for engaging youth in community health promotion in the Middle East: 1) engagement, 2) issue identification, 3) planning, 4) action, 5) Rs; research, reflect, reward and 6) sustainability.

Participants and Setting: 20 Grade 9 students (10 boys, 10 girls) from two Bedouin communities: 10 from Tuba-Zangaria in North Israel; 10 from Segev Shalom in the Negev – South Israel.

Intervention: Using low-end (photo-voice, photography) and high-end internet-based technology, youth identified and documented the strengths and weaknesses of their communities, and then undertook a community action project focusing on one important issue. Workbooks including process guides and tools for each step of the EIPARS model are available online at: <http://www.globalyouthvoices.org/resources.html>

Outcomes: Similar issues were identified in each community: e.g., smoking, injuries, friendships, Bedouin culture. Unique issues identified were suicide at Tuba and industrial pollution at Segev Shalom. Students at Tuba selected Suicide Prevention for a community project and prepared a PowerPoint presentation for educating their peers, teachers and parents. Youth from Segev Shalom created a video and photo exhibit on Violence Prevention. Photo-essays and their action projects were uploaded to the Global Youth Voices website for virtual discussion and sharing with youth globally (www.globalyouthvoices.org/middle-east/greetings-en.html).

Conclusion: This project demonstrated that the EIPARS model can be used successfully for engaging youth and creating youth-driven community action in the Middle East. This public health intervention provides a positive approach for building cooperation in conflicted regions.

MeSH terms: Adolescent; health promotion; health services research; world health; Middle East

La traduction du résumé se trouve à la fin de l'article.

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Young people often feel marginalized in a world controlled by adults, where it is difficult to get their voices heard. The challenge is to engage them authentically in the decision-making process.^{1,2} Youth in the Middle East are no exception. In particular, young people in the region feel quite disenfranchised by the difficult political and social conditions that dominate the Middle East.^{3,4}

The goal of this study was to evaluate a model⁵ for engaging youth in health promotion and youth-driven community action in the Middle East. Using photography⁶ and high-end Internet-based technologies,^{7,8} youth documented the strengths and weaknesses of their communities and took action on selected issues of importance to them. The specific aims were to have youth: a) identify important community health issues (community needs profile), b) successfully complete an action project addressing a priority issue, and c) reflect on the impact of this participation and lessons learned for extending the project in the Middle East.

Through these projects, youth learned teamwork and leadership skills, as part of a larger goal in building Arab and Israeli cooperation. This research was carried out under the umbrella of the Canada International Scientific Exchange Program (www.cisepo.ca) based at Mount Sinai Hospital and the University of Toronto, and as part of the Global Youth Voices (www.GlobalYouthVoices.org) initiative of TeenNet Research (www.TeenNet.ca) based at the University of Toronto. For the past decade, CISEPO has successfully brought Israelis, Jordanians and Palestinians together in academically-based programs.^{3,9} TeenNet uses a participatory action research approach^{10,11} locally and internationally that integrates information technology with community involvement for youth health promotion.¹²

PARTICIPANTS, SETTING AND INTERVENTION

The 20 grade 9 participants (10 boys, 10 girls) were from two Bedouin communities: 10 from Tuba-Zangaria and 10 from Segev Shalom. There are approximately 190,000 Bedouin in Israel: 130,000 in the southern Negev desert, 10,000 in the centre and 50,000 in the north. Half of the Negev Bedouin population lives in seven

Figure 1. Global Youth Voices Six Phase Model

recognized villages – some of the poorest communities in Israel. Segev Shalom is the smallest recognized village with a population around 3,000. Tuba-Zangaria, located in the north of Israel, has a population of 6,500 and is more developed.

This research was guided by a six-stage model termed *EIPARS*⁵ for sustainable action with youth (Figure 1). 1) *Engage* involves connecting with youth and motivating them to work together on a project in their community. Using the Photovoice method,^{6,13} groups take pictures and write about important themes in their community. 2) *Identify* entails exploring and identifying issues that concern youth in their community. 3) *Plan* focuses on choosing one issue and developing a strategy for addressing it. 4) *Act* involves implementing the project. 5) *Research, Reflect and Reward* involves youth evaluating the effectiveness of the project and reflecting on outcomes of the group process. 6) *Sustain* considers ways to continue the work through successive groups. The model has been used successfully with diverse youth groups in Canada and internationally.⁵ Workbooks including process guides and tools for each step are available online at: <http://www.globalyouthvoices.org/resource.s.html> (Accessed December 2, 2006).

The project was initiated in March 2004, focusing on engagement and identification. Participants used photography to identify personal and community health issues. They then selected a number of pho-

tographs and wrote descriptive captions, and their photo-essays were uploaded to the *Global Youth Voices* website. Participants and facilitators met on May 20, 2004 at Tel Aviv University where they presented and discussed the issues they identified within their community. Surveys were completed at this stage of the project.

During October 2004-January 2005, the second phase of the project focused on planning and action. Facilitators aided students in selecting an issue, planning, and then carrying out the action plan. On December 22, 2004, participants met at Hebrew University to present their community health projects. The youth then carried out the projects in their respective communities and completed surveys for this second phase.

The methodology was both quantitative (surveys) and qualitative (group discussions; journals kept by the facilitators). Surveys were used to create a demographic and technology use profile, and to evaluate experiences in the *EIPARS* process. They were distributed: prior to the *EIPARS* process, following the Engagement/Issue Identification stage and following the Planning/Action stage. Notes from the group discussions and facilitator journals were analyzed using an inductive qualitative approach, drawing on the research aims as a guiding framework.^{14,15} The transcripts were analyzed by RB and RW and then independently checked by SH and HS to derive first-level interpretations.

TABLE I

Issues Identified by Youth in Two Bedouin Communities

Issue	Segev Shalom	Tuba-Zangaria
Smoking	x	x
Drugs	x	x
Sports	x	x
Pollution	x	x
Violence*	x	x
Animals	x	x
Household Dangers	x	x
Family	x	x
Nature	x	x
Safe Play Areas	x	
Bugs	x	
Television	x	
Women's Issues	x	
Computers	x	
Car Accidents		x
Modernization of the Bedouin Community		x
Helping Others		x
Bedouin Culture		x
Suicide*		x

* issue selected for their Action Project

An ethics protocol was approved by the Human Subjects Ethics Review Committee, University of Toronto, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity.

OUTCOMES

Issue identification

Youth identified a variety of issues that were important in their community (Table I), ranging from smoking to helping a younger sibling with homework. Half of the issues were common to both schools, such as drugs, violence and sports. However, certain issues were unique to each Bedouin village, such as suicide in Tuba and women's issues in Segev Shalom. With each issue, a short paragraph was written by the student explaining its personal importance. The photo essays are available at www.globalyouthvoices.org/middle-east/greetings-en.html. For example, one student from Tuba wrote this about Suicide: "The boy in this picture represents a suicide act. In my village, there have been a few suicides. My cousin was successful in committing suicide. This act was really hurtful for me because it was a tragic way to die."

Action projects

Students from Segev Shalom presented a video and created an exhibit targeting their selected topic of 'Violence Prevention.' The aim was to educate school peers on the various forms and manifestation of violence

TABLE II

Youth Perspectives on Participating in the Project

Questions	Agree	
	Segev Shalom	Tuba-Zangaria
1* Why did you stay involved in the project?		
a) I liked the idea of doing something for my community	9/9	9/9
b) I was having fun	9/9	9/9
c) I liked thinking about issues in my community	9/9	9/9
d) I liked the people in the project	9/9	9/9
1† Why did you stay involved in the project?		
a) I liked thinking about ways to help my community	6/6	6/6
b) I liked doing the action	6/6	6/6
c) I was having fun	6/6	6/6
d) I liked the people in the project	4/6	5/6
2* Do you think you have the skill and ability to make a difference in your community?	10/10	9/10
2† Do you think you have the skill and ability to make a difference in your community?	6/6	6/6
3* How satisfied are you with the project?	10/10	9/9
3† Did you enjoy being part of this project?	6/6	6/6
4† Would you recommend a project like this to a friend?	6/6	6/6
5* How confident are you that you could develop a project that could make a difference in your community?	10/10	9/9
5† Do you feel that the action made a difference?	6/6	5/6
6* Did you like using pictures to identify issues in your community?	9/10	9/10
7* Are you looking forward to having your pictures displayed on the Internet for others to see?	10/10	8/9
8* Do you feel that you were able to talk about the issues that were most important to you?	10/10	9/9
9* Did you feel that discussing the issues helped you understand your community better?	10/10	9/9
10* Did you feel discussing the issues helped you understand other group members' opinions better?	10/10	9/9
11† Did you feel good about the action that the group did?	6/6	6/6
12† Did you feel that you were able to take part in the action the way you wanted to?	6/6	6/6
13† Did you feel that the group did a good job at making the action happen?	5/6	6/6
14† Do you want to continue taking action on the issue?	6/6	5/6

* denotes survey at end of Engagement/Issue Identification phase

† denotes survey at end of Planning/Action phase

and provide resources for violence prevention. In the video, a youth defines violence and describes its effects on the daily lives of their community. This is followed by two monologues: 1) a female student telling a true story of emotional abuse as a child (a story of a female Arab writer) and 2) a male student telling of verbal abuse by his teachers (a fictional story). A short skit follows showing students physically fighting over cigarettes. Two interviews conclude the video, the first involving the school's guidance counselor describing various reasons that contribute to violence, and the second a religious figure in the community explaining Islam's condemnation of violence. For the photo and article exhibit, youth displayed newspaper photos and articles as well as photos they had taken themselves to illustrate examples of emotional, physical, sexual and political violence. Community resources were listed for victims of violence.

Students from Tuba presented the topic of 'Suicide Prevention.' Their aim was to educate teachers and parents in the community on the subject of suicide. Youth prepared a PowerPoint presentation detailing general facts and statistics on suicide in Israel, myths, contributing and protective factors, and reasons for suicide (available at: http://www.globalyouthvoices.org/middle-east/Tuba%20English2_files/

frame.htm. Accessed December 2, 2006). The last portion of the presentation focused on prevention, including signs of depression, warning signs, protective factors, steps for prevention, and community resources.

Youth perspectives (Tables II & III)

Youth enjoyed being part of the project and indicated that they would recommend it to a friend. Also, they stated a desire to make a difference in their community and expand the project to involve more than just their school. Questions regarding various aspects of the project received very positive responses; aspects most enjoyed by students included the photography, seeing their work on the internet, making the video, 'being heard' and meeting with the other participating Bedouin students. The majority of participants said they would not change anything about the project. However, some difficulties were noted and suggestions made for improvement, such as: not enough time for the project, inconvenient meeting times, difficulty at times in discussing issues raised, and wanting a greater number of students involved in the project.

DISCUSSION

This project demonstrated that the *Global Youth Voices* EIPARS model can be used

successfully with Bedouin youth in the Middle East. Both the survey results and discussions with facilitators indicated that this endeavor had a very positive impact on the students. The youth especially enjoyed the opportunity to express their opinions. This was empowering, especially for the girls at Segev Shalom, where the Bedouin culture is undergoing major transition from a patriarchic society. According to one girl: "*This is the first time that anyone has asked me for my opinion.*" Statements like this help validate the work that was done.

Many lessons were learned. The use of cameras in the engagement process was a very effective tool to help youth express concerns about their community. Through involvement in this project, the youth gained competence and confidence to take action on community issues. A balanced view of the political conflict was presented by participants. Indeed, our results show that young people can present a constructive perspective on issues gripping the Middle East.

The two Bedouin communities have large differences between them. This was evident at Tel Aviv University when the two groups first met. Since Segev Shalom is a more traditional community, students (especially female) have less freedom to travel and were quite excited about going

TABLE III

Youth Reflections on the Project

What has been the best part for you personally about the project?

- a) Segev Shalom
- Taking pictures of the negative and positive issues in my society
 - Using the internet
 - Having my stories displayed on the website
 - Discussing the various issues that were brought up, both positive and negative
 - That we were able to express ourselves about things that are important to our community
 - To learn the issues and opinions of the other students in my group
 - Raising awareness about health issues
 - Making the movie
 - Acting in the movie
 - Knowing that people were supporting me/us
 - Getting to know the students from Tuba and learning about their culture and opinions
- b) Tuba-Zangaria
- Taking pictures
 - The conversations about the social issues in my community
 - Being able to express my feelings and problems
 - Through this project, I was better able to understand myself
 - Group cooperation and seeing our project on the internet
 - Learning about my own abilities and how to recognize signs if I'm in trouble [signs of suicide]
 - The meeting at Tel Aviv and Hebrew Universities
 - Meeting with the other group of Bedouin students
 - I enjoyed the entire project

What has been difficult for you personally about the project?

- a) Segev Shalom
- Expressing ourselves through taking photos, but only in the beginning. It was easier later.
 - Meeting times were sometimes inconvenient
 - Time. We didn't have the time we needed. If we had more time, we would've been able to give and do more.
 - Taking pictures
- b) Tuba-Zangaria
- Large time commitment
 - Choosing the photographs
 - Taking pictures

What would you do differently next time about the project?

- a) Segev Shalom
- Nothing
 - Would add more time
 - Increase the length of the project
 - Increase the number of students involved
 - The project should be deeper and more developed
- b) Tuba-Zangaria
- Nothing
 - The project should include more than 10 youth
 - Meet with more groups
 - More discussion with the other group

to Tel Aviv and Jerusalem for group meetings. At the first meeting, there was some initial tension. Several students from Segev Shalom wondered if the other community was "really" Bedouin, since the girls were not dressed in traditional clothing. However, as the meeting progressed and students shared their views, they identified many similarities despite cultural differences – an important lesson in the Middle East. By the end of the meeting, the students had become friends. Also, holding the meetings at major Israeli universities helped promote the importance of higher education.

While this initial project was conducted in Israel's Bedouin community, it is currently being expanded to include Israeli (Jewish) and Palestinian schools. In 2006/2007, Jordanian youth will be added to the program. University students from the region are involved as facilitators in this research. These students from various disciplines (medicine, health, social work and education) are being given an opportunity to learn youth engagement skills and run groups as part of their academic program.

The EIPARS model was initially developed, evaluated and refined with 13 Youth Voices groups involving over 100 youth and 11 community organizations in urban, small town and rural locations in Ontario, Canada.⁵ Subsequently, the model was extended to international locations and

cultural contexts including street-involved youth in Nairobi, Kenya, and HIV education with UNESCO schools in Mozambique, Vietnam, Slovenia and Egypt (http://www.globalyouthvoices.org/action_projects.html).

The evaluation model that guides our work features three inter-related levels of impact.¹⁶ Drawing on the UNESCO 4 Pillars of Education,¹⁷ the inner layer focuses on the impact of the project on youth participants in four areas: a) *learning to know*, acquiring the instruments of understanding; b) *learning to do*, acting creatively on one's environment; c) *learning to live together*, participating and cooperating with others; and d) *learning to be*, emphasizing the development of the complete person. The middle layer looks at the impact of the project on the local community, in particular family, peers, school and town.^{10,11} The outer layer investigates the impact of projects on successfully building Arab and Israeli cooperation at a population level.^{3,9} The Global Youth Voices team has developed quantitative questionnaires, social network analysis tools and qualitative methods for project evaluation, which are available from the corresponding author.

CONCLUSION

This project provided an initial demonstration that the six-phase EIPARS model can

be used to engage and positively impact Bedouin youth and their communities. The Global Youth Voices – Middle East program is now being implemented on a larger scale. It has major implications as a positive approach for using peace through health¹⁸ initiatives for building relationships and mutual understanding among youth and their communities in the Middle East.

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RÉSUMÉ

Objectif : Cette étude porte sur le modèle en six étapes (EIPARS) utilisé par l'organisme Global Youth Voices pour inciter les jeunes à promouvoir la santé communautaire au Moyen-Orient : 1) la mobilisation, 2) la définition de l'enjeu, 3) la planification, 4) l'action, 5) les trois R (recherche, réflexion, récompense) et 6) la durabilité.

Participants et lieu : 20 élèves de 9^e année (10 garçons, 10 filles) dans deux villages bédouins : 10 à Touba-Zangéria, dans le nord d'Israël, et 10 à Séguév Shalom, dans le Néguev (sud d'Israël).

Intervention : À l'aide de techniques de bas niveau (photo-voix, photographie) et de haut niveau (Internet), les jeunes ont cerné et documenté les forces et les faiblesses de leurs villages, puis entrepris un projet d'action communautaire axé sur un enjeu important. Ils ont eu accès à des manuels en ligne, y compris des guides de procédure et des outils pour chaque étape du modèle EIPARS (<http://www.globalyouthvoices.org/resources.html>).

Résultats : Des enjeux semblables ont été cernés dans les deux villages : le tabagisme, les blessures, l'amitié, la culture bédouine. À Touba seulement, on a cerné le problème du suicide, et à Séguév Shalom seulement, celui de la pollution industrielle. Les élèves de Touba ont choisi la prévention du suicide comme projet communautaire et ont préparé une présentation PowerPoint pour sensibiliser leurs pairs, les enseignants et les parents. Les jeunes de Séguév Shalom ont réalisé une vidéo et monté une exposition de photos sur la prévention de la violence. Les essais photographiques et les projets d'intervention ont été téléchargés sur le site Web de Global Youth Voices pour y faire l'objet d'une discussion virtuelle et être partagés avec des jeunes du monde entier (www.globalyouthvoices.org/middle-east/greetings-en.html).

Conclusion : Ce projet montre que le modèle EIPARS peut être utilisé avec succès pour mobiliser les jeunes et créer des interventions communautaires pilotées par les jeunes au Moyen-Orient. Cette mesure d'intervention en santé publique est une démarche positive qui peut favoriser la coopération dans les régions en conflit.

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PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS:

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- > The Causes of the Obesity Epidemic in Children
- > Are children/youth more/less active than previous generations?
- > Is physical inactivity contributing to obesity in children and youth?
- > What are the practical implications of the physical activity deficit?
- > What are the public policy and public health implications of the physical activity deficit?
- > Are there successful, innovative community-based physical activity interventions?

Organized by the group that hosted the "1988 and 1992 International Conferences on Physical Activity, Fitness and Health"; and "Whistler 2001 – Communicating Physical Activity and Health Messages". Managed by the Canadian Fitness & Lifestyle Research Institute.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE VISIT:

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