



INTERCOMMUNITY COLLABORATION: A STRATEGY FOR SUSTAINING HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION ACTIVITIES IN CHALLENGING CONTEXTS



This good practice was developed with partners of a previous program, **Partners for Engaged Citizenship** in Haiti for the current **Advancing Equality through Human Rights Education** project. The good practices featured in this series are ‘living practices,’ meaning that they are continuously evolving and adapting.

This good practice has a twofold objective. It aims, on one hand, to **promote capacity building** of local actors and community leaders from different backgrounds in human rights education and, on the other hand, to **strengthen collaboration** between these actors and leaders in the implementation of human rights education activities. This section will outline the process of developing and applying this practice in the specific context of communities in Haiti, however, this practice of **inter-community collaboration** can be learned from and applied to other contexts for human rights education activities. Especially those which also have security constraints that may limit mobility.

This practice was developed through a **participatory process with all the actors**, notably the **community groups** and **coaches** of the 4 target communities of the project, during the preparation of the community forums that were organized. Due to the context of insecurity, community coaches (with perhaps less experience in human rights education) and community





group members were mobilized to facilitate human rights education activities, taking into account geographic proximity. Thus, the communities of Jacmel and Gressier saw their activities carried out with the support of a team from Jacmel that traveled to support the team in Gressier and vice versa. The same was true for La Victoire and Thomassique. The strategy was adopted and implemented during 2 meetings involving all the actors of the 4 communities; this allowed the groups to collectively lay the foundations.

The project team then deepened their reflections and communicated again with all the people involved about their roles and responsibilities. **To ensure the success of this collaboration, it was necessary to build the capacity of the local actors involved.** To do this, **several coaching sessions** were held between the national coordinator and relevant members of the community groups, as well as between the experienced coaches (one experienced coach was assigned to each community as a **“support coach”**) and the less experienced community coaches on how to best carry out their role.

The success of this strategy inspired the pedagogical and orientation committee (composed of 4 experienced coaches) to propose, during a **strategic reflection workshop**, that the rest of the project activities be carried out in the same dynamic of inter-community collaboration. This proposal was based on the fact that **this approach makes it possible to consolidate the capacities of local actors for the sustainability of human rights education activities.** It is an excellent way to promote capacities and to **enhance the sharing of knowledge and experiences** in the field of human rights. Through this practice, the leadership of the community members is strengthened, since they are called upon to **take greater ownership of human rights** and **assume a leading role in their dissemination and popularization within their community.** The practice documented here is also a more efficient way to carry out human rights education activities and **impact more people.** It also strengthens the **synergy between communities and human rights defenders.** Finally, it allows for a **decentralization of roles and responsibilities for human rights education** which, until now, have been assumed solely or primarily by experienced coaches.

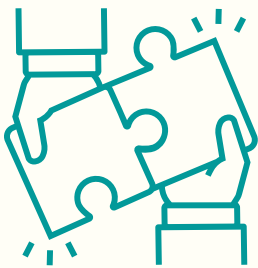


LESSONS LEARNED

For proper implementation of this good practice, the people selected within communities to take over or assume primary responsibility for human rights education should be individuals with **at least basic knowledge of human rights, or who have already participated in human rights education activities.** In addition, as a prelude to their deployment, their capacities should be strengthened through **coaching sessions on the facilitation of human rights education activities.** This capacity building or coaching can be done by coaches with extensive experience and proven expertise in human



rights education. These coaching sessions are extremely important as they ensure the success of the good practice and help avoid some of the potential pitfalls. It should be kept in mind that in the context of skills or capacity transfer, there is a risk of bias in understanding or even corruption (a case of corruption was noted in the implementation of this good practice and dealt with by the national coordination). From this perspective, the sessions can be better planned by devoting more time to them (depending on the level of capacity of the people identified to play the roles in question) and ideally with the help of an outline or guide developed for this purpose (which was not the case during the initial implementation of this good practice).



Inter-community collaboration is also an opportunity for project teams to consider **strengthening networking among human rights defenders**. In the context of this good practice, this had been done organically, but we recommend that it is planned and carried out in a structured way with rigorous follow-up after the activities. Networking among human rights defenders is one effective way to expand the impact of human rights education and to reduce their vulnerability to the many threats or attacks often faced, especially in contexts with insecurity.

