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ASAP MODEL PROGRAMME CASES STUDIES - IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

IN THE CONTEXT OF THE

Against School Aggression Partnership

Community Based School Programme for Effective Prevention
and Treatment of Aggression and Bullying



INTRODUCTION

The problems of aggressive and bullying behaviour at school have reached high proportions across the world, which in turn led to the creation of multiple strategies to prevent or tackle such cases. However tools can have different effects if applied in different school environment and situations.

Anti-Bullying interventions and alternative conflict resolution methods such as mediation, peer mediation or restorative practices offer the possibility to reinforce relationships within a community and can prevent the escalation towards aggression. Preventing and treating aggression has to become a priority in schools since a safe and positive environment is enhancing social and emotional learning and also increasing academic achievement.

The ASAP - Against School Aggression Partnership Model Programme is proposing a flexible whole school approach with several methods and tools. The programme was tested in 9 schools from Hungary, Bulgaria and Malta. Every implementation took different directions, depending on: who were the stakeholders involved, which were the methods chosen what resources were available.

This guide is a step by step outline of the implementation of the Model Programme tested in the four schools in Malta:

- St. Clare College – Pembroke Secondary, Form 3s
- St. Thomas More College – St. Lucia Secondary Form 3s
- Maria Regina College – Naxxar Middle School Form 1s
- St. Margaret College – Cospicua Middle School Form 1s

The ASAP project is led by Partners Hungary Foundation (PHF) in collaboration with SOS Malta, Partners Bulgaria Foundation (PBF) and Szolnoki Szolgáltatási Szakképzési Centrum (Szolnok Centre of Counselling Training) and funded by the Erasmus Programme of the European Union.

The ASAP Model Programme implementation in Malta was done in partnership with the Anti-Bullying Service.

The Hungarian and Bulgarian case studies are accessible in English at <https://www.partnershungary.hu/erasmus/>.

**The European Commission support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents which reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.*



HOW TO READ THIS GUIDE

This handbook is a practical account of how the program was implemented in different school environments. The document does not provide a ready-made solution but gives guidance on the possible usage of the ASAP Model Programme elements. They can be used separately but work best as part of a whole process.

The guide is designed for those who want to implement a similar program in their schools: Principals, Heads of school, SMT (Senior Management Team), teachers, guidance teachers, Psycho-Social teams and other school-related professionals.

In order to get familiar with the conceptual framework and the process-oriented, holistic approach, we recommend that you read the ASAP Model Program first.

This is large collection of different experiences, thus the reading is facilitated by a division of sections and a set of icons signalling the areas of intervention:

SYMBOLS

Who is the information for?



Useful information for principals and SMT



Useful information for teachers

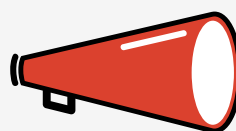


Useful information for school-related professionals - Psycho-Social team



Useful information for parents

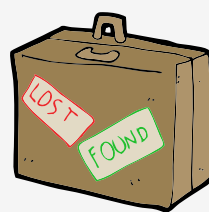
Areas of intervention



Raising awareness



Social and emotional learning

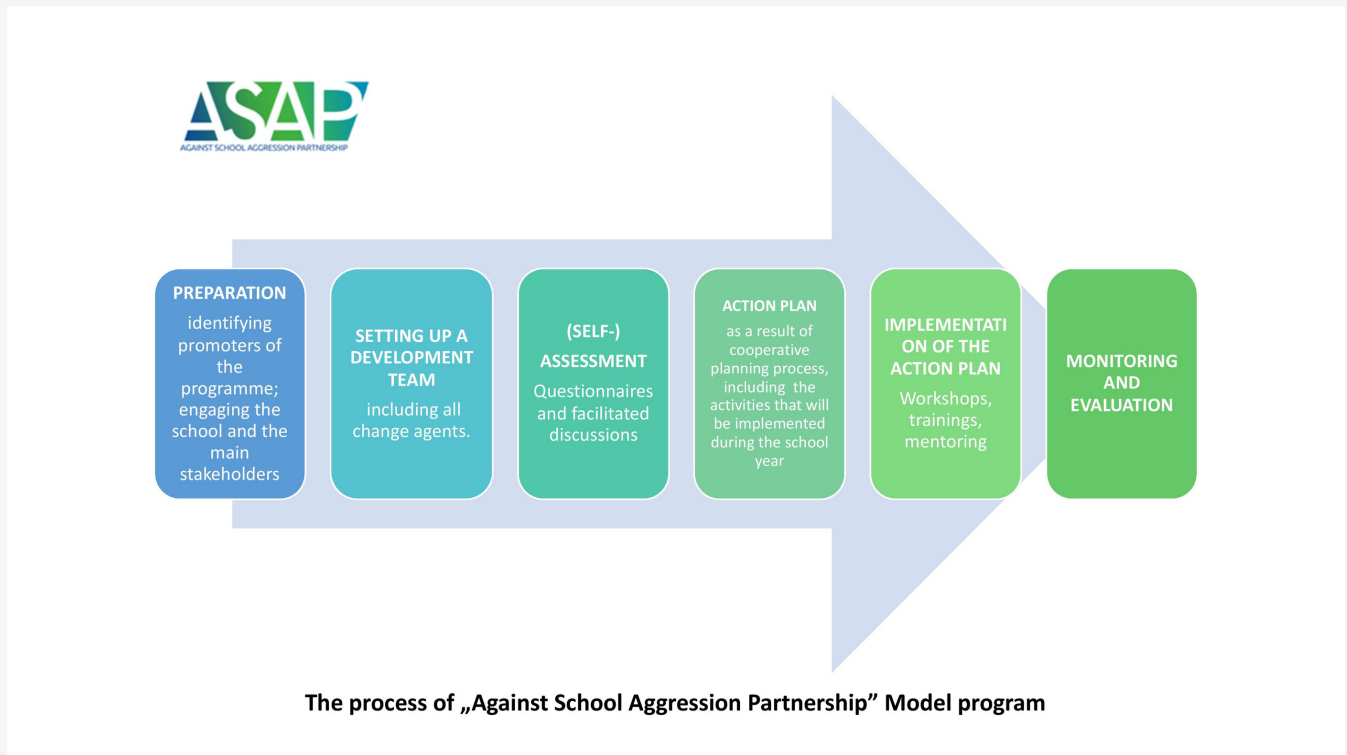


Individual case management



Monitoring and evaluation

HOW TO READ THIS GUIDE



The questions that will be covered in each of the 6 chapters are the following:

- What was the starting point?
- What was the method used?
- What were our expectations?
- What were the challenges we faced and how did we tackle them?
- How far did we get? What was the outcome?
- Recommendations, lessons learned.

In this chapter you will get to know about the steps taken in order to identify and actively engage all stakeholders which are connected with the targeted student community: the school management, the student services and psycho-social team most relevant for preventing and tackling bullying and aggression.

STARTING POINT

This phase was conducted in parallel with the mapping exercise carried out to identify the national best practices on prevention and tackling of bullying behaviour and aggression in Malta. The mapping started with the national policy framework and governmental services. It then looked at resources and projects or initiatives by Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO's). The information was collected in a report, which includes information about each actor identified and can be found following this link: <http://www.sosmalta.org/file.aspx?f=919>

Due to the nature of the project and the focus on bullying and aggression in the school environment, the Anti-Bullying Service (ABS) in Malta was identified as the most relevant partner at local level. SOS Malta initiated discussions with the ABS and started a partnership for the implementation of the project.

The Anti-Bullying Service in Malta identified four schools suitable to take on the challenge of implementation of the ASAP Model Programme and the corresponding four members of the ABS team each became the leader of the implementation/development team in their school: Santa Lucia Secondary, Pembroke Secondary, Naxxar Middle School and Cospicua Middle School.

METHOD USED



A survey was sent to all Heads of School from state colleges across the country with the support of the Education For All Department, in order to inform the schools about the project and also collect data about the School Management's experience with bullying and aggression in schools. The data collected through this survey served as a foundation for the National Report – Tackling bullying, aggression and violence in Maltese State schools.



An exchange of good practices was also crucial prior to the creation and implementation of a Model Programme. This took place in Malta and brought together local stakeholders and the foreign partners of the project. On this occasion they presented and discussed the most used and efficient methods to tackle and prevent bullying and aggression. The sessions included presentations followed by Question and Answer (Q&A) sessions but also practical workshops such as the Wanda Method or Solution Focused Education.



Face to face unilateral or group meetings took place with the ABS, SMT's and other professionals, where one or more stakeholders were involved. The project was presented to the Principals and the Heads of schools during a general meeting with the Student Services Director and SOS Malta representatives.

Regular (bi-weekly) Skype meetings were also held between the international partners: PBF, SOS Malta and PHF.

EXPECTATIONS

The aim of this preparatory phase was primarily to identify and engage all stakeholders, but also learn about existing methods and resources already in use at local and international level. Other expectations:

- Identify the key partners from the National School Support Services and align the ASAP Model Programme implementation with the work done by the Anti-Bullying Service.
- Figure out the needs of the schools and of the professionals while also taking note of possible obstacles, such as availability of staff for participating in trainings, lengthy bureaucratic procedures, cultural differences etc.

OUTCOME

Raising awareness among school staff and professionals on the importance of systemic based change.

Reinforcing the approach and methodologies chosen at policy level for addressing bullying behaviour: restorative practices and a whole school approach. Identifying the right motivated partners and building the strategy of the project implementation together.

This initial phase was crucial for avoiding replication and creating conflicting initiatives with existing services.

ABS team and SOS Malta participated to a practical introductory Training on Restorative Practices, which laid down the whole school approach foundation of the Model Programme. The training took part in Hungary and it also provided the opportunity for different professionals to exchange ideas.

USEFUL TIPS

- Provide a safe space where all those involved can share their views and needs without the fear of repercussions.
- Align the implementation of the programme as much as possible with the work carried out already to tackle and prevent bullying or aggression.
- Acknowledge the importance of a shared responsibility between all stakeholders involved with the same student community: teaching and non-teaching staff, professionals, SMT, parents, governmental and non-governmental entities, etc.
- A strong leadership can ensure the success of implementing a process based programme.



In this chapter you will read about the process of engaging actors and creating development teams.

STARTING POINT

For a successful implementation of a school based Model Programme to tackle and prevent bullying and aggression it was very important to ensure the involvement of all stakeholders.

Meetings were held in Malta and Hungary, where the different teams were able to work together and share knowledge. This also meant we could brainstorm ideas on how to create a better programme to implement in school, and how to reach the students most effectively.

The development of the implementation teams was initiated by the Director of the National School Support Services, who believed in collaborating with the civil society sector. Which assisted with the engagement of Management Teams of Colleges and later on, the Senior Management Teams of the four participating schools.

EXPECTATIONS

The expectation was to identify interested participants in all four schools who could have ownership on the process of change entailed by the testing of the model programme.

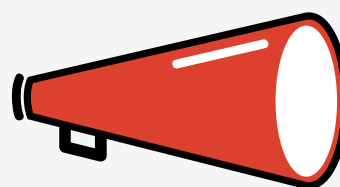
CHALLENGES

The main challenges related to creating the development team, as the overall challenges of implementing the Model Programme, was persuading the school staff, teachers and management team of the importance of a school level approach to tackling bullying and aggression in schools.

Due to extended work in four different school environments, the teams were set up at school level and led by the Anti-Bullying Guidance Teacher. Their involvement was crucial in order to forge an alliance and also provide suitable trainings in line with national strategy and policy.

Meetings were held both in Malta and Hungary, where the different teams could share knowledge, good practices and ideas. Which in the end also created the opportunity to develop better plans.

Other members of the development teams included Assistant Heads, members of the Psycho-Social team: social workers, counsellors, psychologists or youth workers.



Thus the pivotal member of the development team always remained the Anti-bullying service guidance teacher, who took the implementation of the programme as part of their daily work load. This also meant that the person could not allocate time weekly to the project, due to all the work commitments connected to between 3 to 6 other schools, which were not part of the project.

Lack of time and resources was also an important obstacle. The access to school staff, especially teachers was found problematic but the most difficult to reach were parents throughout the whole implementation of the programme.

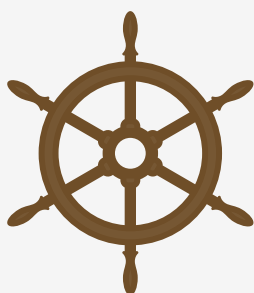
Embarking on a journey of promoting change in a school environment is difficult, however doing this within the context of three different countries was even more challenging. The structural differences that existed in terms of available school services for students, created an imbalanced foundation for the implementation of the programme.

While many issues were already tackled in schools in Malta, by the student services (the Anti-Bullying Service in particular) and the psycho-social teams, in the other countries the available staff and resources were limited.

OUTCOME

The outcome of this phase in the implementation of the Model Programme was the creation of a team that was willing to invest time and energy in promoting and achieving positive change at the school level.

USEFUL TIPS



- Express clearly the role of the team and respect realistically established deadlines.
- Have a large enough team which would allow a proportionate distribution of tasks. This is useful if during the implementation phase staff members change or they decided not to participate anymore in the project.
- More engagement with the leadership of the school.

In this chapter you will read about the assessment and analysis of the situation with regards to bullying and aggression in each individual school. This part of the process provides a basis for the development of the action plan.

STARTING POINT



The assessment phase started with mapping and discussing the availability of resources, existing practices and challenges at school level. Such discussions were facilitated by the Anti-Bullying Guidance Teachers who were aware of the situation regarding bullying, especially due to the referral system already in place in all state schools.



The most extensive and important part of the assessment was the dissemination of a pre-implementation questionnaire, with the aim of identifying the needs of the students, parents and the school staff.



Following clearance from the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education, dissent forms together with questionnaires for parents and students were distributed through the school. An online questionnaire was forwarded also to all school staff.

EXPECTATIONS

The assessment was aimed at identifying the real needs of each school environment. Not only to check the prevalence of school aggression or bullying behaviour but also to measure the knowledge and relationship between the stakeholders.

METHOD USED

The assessment was carried out through the quantitative data collected through questionnaires. The data was analysed and took the form of a research report, which can be accessed following this link:

This was complemented through meetings and brain storming session held with the ABS and other stakeholders.

The report was followed by recommendations in terms of activities and strategies that should be adopted in order to prevent and tackle bullying.

CHALLENGES

The main challenges were related to when and how to disseminate the questionnaires to the students and parents.

The development teams realised that the questionnaires could not be disseminated in different days at the same school, but all the students involved had to fill in the questionnaire at the same time. The students' participation was only possible with [parental consent, however from the ABS's experience it is very difficult to collect such forms from the parents, thus for the ASAP questionnaires another approach was taken. Instead of consent forms it was decided to use dissent forms, through which parents could choose not to participate to the study.

The questionnaires for parents and students were distributed as a hard copy, which made the assessment phase lengthier than expected, however it ensured a higher number of responders. Some issues were encountered when explaining the questions to the students, some found the wording too complex, while others had problems understanding both English or Maltese.

The questionnaires disseminated to the teaching and non-teaching staff took less time to collect because of the use of an online system.

OUTCOME

The information collected through the assessment phase informed the next phases of implementation. The gaps and needs identified, as well as the recommendations received were taken into account while developing the strategy for the activities, lesson plans, trainings and workshops that were developed at a later phase of the project.

A large number of students mentioned that they don't always feel safe at school and also they don't feel respected by other students - 58% of the whole student population who responded, feeling only sometimes respected by their peers. Different types of bullying were reported as being most prevalent around the school, with verbal, physical and social bullying as the most common.

The participants were also given the chance to make suggestions related to strategies that could help reduce the class/school aggression and bullying levels. The suggestions given by both students and adults were focused on proposed activities that would teach or enhance friendship skills and teamwork among classmates. As a result, one of the activities carried out as part of the model programme, was an informal workshop focused on friendship and the bystander effect.

The suggestions coming from the teaching and non-teaching staff revolved around the need for more training on how to recognise and deal with bullying behaviour and aggression, or other challenging behaviours adopted by students. It was also signalled that not all teachers are given such trainings. An imbalance was identified between the level of preparedness on dealing with bullying between Learning Support Assistance staff and other school staff, with the first group considering that they are not empowered enough. The main outcome of this phase was to inform the creation of appropriate measures and activities as part of the Model Programme implementation plan.

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USEFUL TIPS



Dissemination of an online questionnaire might be a more suitable alternative if the school wants to measure the situation on its own, without the assistance of an external actor, such as an NGO in this case.



Ensure anonymity and always ask for the respondents' opinion. These two aspects were appreciated by participants, especially students who liked the fact that their opinion was taken into account.



If the questionnaires are disseminated in a single school, make sure to adapt the questions to the specific context.



A dissent form is a better alternative to a consent form that could take a long time to be returned by the students . Parents were asked to sign the form only in case they did not want their children and themselves to take part in the research.

The supervisors should make sure to explain clearly the purpose of the survey and do not give examples on how to answer the questions. This might influence the respondents.

The data collected should be analysed through the perspective a researcher but also discussed with the professionals who know the school environment and are aware of what might have influenced the results.



In this chapter you will read about how the data from the assessment phase was used to inform the content and types of the activities from the implementation phase.

STARTING POINT

The Model Programme proved to be a living document with a flexible timeline with a different roadmap for each school.

Four Action Plans were created according to the needs identified but also with limitations specific to the school environment and the resources that were made available.

The Action Plans were created following several meetings with the Anti-Bullying guidance teachers and the SMT's representatives from each school.

The activities and trainings were designed to match the feedback from the questionnaires but were also based on the extended experience of the ABS team who were already working with the schools and student community.

What played an important role was the profile and experience of the organisations partners to the project: Partner Hungary Foundation, SOS Malta and Partners Bulgaria Foundation.

The Action Plan included different types of activities targeting different groups: students, teaching/non-teaching staff and parents.

METHOD USED

The methods used for this step were consultation meetings, brainstorming and desk research.

EXPECTATIONS

The Action Plan was a very important step in the implementation of the Model Programme, and in many occasions the time constrains influenced the type of activities that could be organised.

The expectation was that the school team would be more involved in the decision making regarding the activities to be delivered, however this wasn't possible due to time constrains.

CHALLENGES

Developing an implementation plan for each individual school proved to be quite challenging, with the main issue being identifying appropriate dates and times for different sessions to be delivered to students or school staff members.

Delays in identifying topics for training and the available resources to deliver them also represented a disadvantage.

This process took longer than expected due to involvement of the partners from the other two countries and the systemic differences between the schools from Hungary, Malta and Bulgaria. The structure of the scholastic year was different, and also the working hours varied for school staff, especially during summer. Delays at project level among partners affected the development of the action plan.

The aim of the Model Programme was to bring together different actors from the education departments which work with the same student community. However, this also proved to be challenging due to difficulties in aligning schedules and availabilities. In fact, because the school calendars were planned and finalised well in advance, a few of the activities included in the plan had to be postponed or cancelled.

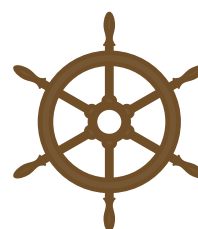
OUTCOME

A comprehensive plan of activities was created, including training sessions for the Anti-Bullying Service, the psycho-social teams and also members of the SMT's. The plan included three types of interventions, targeting students, parents and teaching/non-teaching staff.

Since in Malta there were quite a number of initiatives and services available to tackle bullying and aggression in schools, one of the main objectives of the ASAP Model Programme was to bring such initiatives to the forefront and create a dialogue between practitioners, but also to align the school efforts and resources with college/national initiatives.

The departments involved were:

- Directorate for the Educational Services
- SMT's
- Psycho-Social teams
- Drama Unit
- Personal Social and Career Development Educational Officers



The Drama Unit¹ prepared an Anti-bullying play which dealt with different types of bullying behaviour, raising awareness of its effects and exploring feelings and attitudes of the different characters: perpetrator, bystanders, victim, parents, etc.

¹ National Drama Unit Drama Unit is a team of Peripatetic Teachers that perform drama sessions and Theatre-in-Education (TIE). It was developed back in the 1970's and it evolved to a team of 12 professionals who have a twofold method of teaching, On one hand through drama lessons where students are thought through acting, and secondly through active performances done by the teachers themselves. The thought provoking plays are written by the Education Officer and performed by the whole unit. The performances are also followed by 'hot seating' sessions. Such sessions can be described as a dialogue between the student spectators and the different characters in the play. The session are aimed to challenge the students to practice critical thinking and understand the reasoning and feelings behind different behaviours.

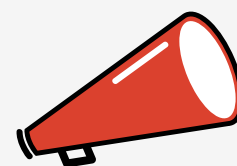


This play was then captured as a video performance and performed by secondary school students from the Malta Visual & Performing Arts School together with Peripatetic Teachers from the Drama Unit. The play is now available as a tool for professionals who want to raise awareness about bullying behaviour, its causes and effects, and can be accessed following this link: <https://youtu.be/8Oi5yP2vHak>

The Anti-bullying guidance teachers developed a set of three lesson plans which can be found in Annex 1. The first lesson is a follow-up for the anti-bullying play, the second focuses on empowering the bystander and finally, the last lesson focusses on cyber-bullying. The plans are suitable for the PSCD handbooks, and each can be covered during an hour. Another activity planned was a peer mediation training for a group of 8 students from Pembroke Secondary, who received training in Hungary and formed a peer mediation team at Pembroke Secondary.



Students also mentioned that they wish they had more occasions to carry out fun group activities where they would learn about friendship, respect and how to be there for each other. This led to the creation of a one-day action event against bullying, focused on informal activities through which the students got the chance to interact, play games and eventually move on to more serious topics related to bullying behaviour, which require their active involvement.





For teaching and non/teaching staff, the initiatives were all related to training in restorative practices and mediation. In addition, the international events which were held in Malta and Hungary also gave the opportunity for this particular target group to share and learn from different practices such as: Wanda, Solution Focused Education, Individual case management - ABS Malta.



The parents were informed about the project through the info sheets delivered at home together with the two questionnaires, while also encouraged to reach out to the school and be informed about student services.

USEFULTIPS

Enough time has to be allocated for this phase of the programme, since the development of a comprehensive plan requires the contribution of different actors and officers of the educational department.

For establishing the settings for each intervention, the appropriate stakeholders need to be consulted and be supportive of the whole initiative.

For the Anti-bullying play developed by the Drama Unit and the lesson plans developed by the Anti-Bullying Guidance Teachers, the involvement of the Educational Officers for Personal Social and Career Development was crucial.



In this chapter you will read about how the Model Programme implementation was carried out in the different schools.

STARTING POINT

Interventions for students

I. Anti-Bullying Play performance and hot seating

Anti-Bullying Guidance Teachers, the leaders of the implementation teams in the four schools, created together with the Drama Unit, SMT's and SOS Malta, an individual plan for the performance of the anti-bullying play in all four schools.

For each school the venue was different in terms of size and facilities, but also was the number of students. For example at Naxxar Secondary, the play was performed to 300 students. There were 6 sessions performed over two days to groups of 50 students. At Pembroke Secondary the play was performed twice, for a number of around 170 students. In Cospicua the students got the chance to be in smaller groups which made their interaction with the characters much easier. The venue used for Santa Lucia Secondary didn't make it very convenient for sustaining in-depth discussions between the facilitator, characters and students, however many pertinent questions and arguments were expressed, paving the way for the first follow up lesson.

The performances were very well received by the students who enjoyed, especially in the smaller groups, to discuss with the characters about their behaviour and their feelings.

In many cases students found solutions and gave advice to the victim and perpetrator, identified alternative reactions that both should have while interacting with each other.

There were also messages of encouragement especially for the victim, as many students were able to empathise with him. Interesting discussion also took place between students and the mother of the victim, who according to the students had a mean behaviour which led to a further victimisation of her son.



2. Lesson plans implementation

The Anti-bullying Guidance teachers discussed with the PSCD teachers and passed on the three lesson plans focused on bullying behaviour (see Annexe 2). The teachers received guidance on how to deliver the lessons and a suggested time during the scholastic year, namely after the performance delivered by the Drama Unit. The lessons had as main objectives:



- Awareness of persons involved in Bullying Behaviour and the feelings that emerge from the play.
- Raising awareness of the roles bystanders take: Empowering the Bystanders
- Awareness of safe usage of the internet and the dangers of online bullying. What can or cannot be done?

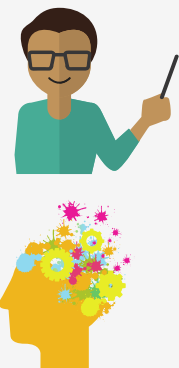


3. Development of the 'Student for student support team' – eight peer mediators from Pembroke Secondary

Considering how impactful peers are among youth and the important role of an active and supportive bystander, the ASAP Model programme also included a training for students in peer mediation. Youth share their problems primarily with each other before reaching out to adults, thus they should be equipped with skills and tools to be supportive of each other and solve conflicts in a constructive way.

The Peer Mediator is a student who:

- can use mediation tools (open questions, summary, etc.);
- knows when they should let a teacher know if help is needed to resolve the conflict;
- together with the guidance teacher - mediator they can lead mediation sessions in student-student or teacher-student conflicts;



The 8 students from Pembroke Secondary were selected according to the following criteria:

- How motivated they were to participate?
- Proved to have skills such as good communication skills, team player, proactive, critical thinking skills in social situations;
- Relevant experience outside of the school context ;

The training took place over 5 days and was organised as a mediation summer camp with participants from Hungary and Bulgaria as well. The participants were able to learn about the mediation approach together and could build connections across borders.

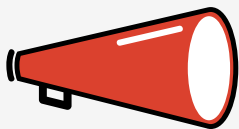
4. Action Day Against bullying – Pembroke Secondary

As closing event for the implementation of the ASAP Model Programme, the team created a one day workshop based on non-formal education with the following objectives:



O1: Reflect on and discuss what is bullying.

O2: Nurture empathy by raising awareness about the effects of bullying behaviour (including cyberbullying).



O3: Nurture tolerance and acceptance through targeted exercises.



O4: Raise an awareness of the responsibility of the bystander; combating bystander apathy, that is the inability of witnesses to take action and support victims – this objective can be tackled for different types of behaviours, not only bullying, but also discrimination and racism, hate crime/hate speech, etc.

The workshop was delivered simultaneously to 180 students, who were divided into groups of about 15 to 20 students per group. For each group, there was a minimum of two facilitators: one member of the ABS and a representative from SOS Malta.

The sessions started with exercises designed to help the participants to get to know each other better and become comfortable with each other and the facilitators. The second part of the workshop focused on exercises that explored the definition of bullying behaviour, types of roles that are involved in such behaviour and also identifying strategies on how best to react. It was very important for students to understand that the focus of the activities was on how to resolve issues by investigating helpful strategies and knowledge to combat bullying behaviour. The emphasis remained throughout the event on making a positive difference.

This event only took place in Pembroke Secondary, due to time and space constraints, which made it impossible to coordinate such a large scale action in Cospicua Middle School, Santa Lucia Secondary and Naxxar Middle school.

Interventions for teaching/non-teaching staff

1. Mediation training

The alternative conflict resolution methods include mediation and the restorative approach. They centre around the idea of conflict as a possibility to rebuild and to restore the lost balance. In fact, conflict, if handled properly, can be used for the benefit of relationships. In mediation, ie. mediated negotiation, the parties involved try to discuss and resolve their conflict with the help of a third, neutral party who is the mediator. The parties of the conflict take part in the process equally, so that the solution is a rebalance for everybody.

Partners Hungary Foundation, the leading partner of ASAP project, has expertise in accredited teacher training including mediation training, thus during the few international meetings held in Malta, training was provided by the Hungarian team to teaching/non-teaching staff from Malta.

To ensure participation, the one-week module training occurred just before the start of the summer holidays, at the Anti-Bullying Service offices.

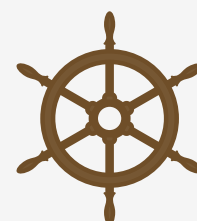


2. Restorative practices training

Alongside mediation, restorative practices was another methodology used through the ASAP project. This method falls in line with the National Policy on 'Addressing bullying behaviour inschools'.

The training started with a taster session held in Budapest and provided only to the leaders of the implementation teams - Anti-Bullying Guidance teachers. This was further complemented with a more extensive training adapted to the Maltese context.

The training on restorative practices in schools was designed to include 3 lectures, each of 2 hours. The 3 days were salient to move from the theoretical and philosophical concepts of restorative justice, to the analysis of a number of restorative justice practices in schools to the final stage of analysing how restorative justice practices can be implemented in schools in Malta respectively.



Since the retributive system and focus on punishment is still considered to be as the most effective manner to deal with those students that do not abide with school regulations, it was expected that the participants would present a level of resistance on exploring the possibility of implementing restorative practices in their respective schools. Thus, the strategy was to start by making the participants brainstorm about 'what is restorative justice?' and how this differs from other retributive practices.



Encouraged to think and discuss how the participants treat misbehaving students (for acts like graffiti or property damage, fighting, theft and truancy among others). Additionally, they were lead to think about possible ways, other than the current practices, on how to deal with the person who committed the wrongdoing and the person who suffered from the offence, the participants verged on the some of the practices that were eventually indicated in the presentation.



The emphasis of this exercise was to make the participant to enhance the sense of accountability towards those harmed, the need of safety within their school community through the building of responsibility and relationships, as well as the development of competency and pro-social skills. These three aspects aimed at restoring students that displayed delinquent behaviour and show them ways how to become stronger and understanding young persons.



While indicating the different practices within restorative justice as from those found the punitive system, the participants were shown footages that witness how restorative justice practices in schools in various countries (e.g. United Kingdom and the United States of America) influence in a positive way both educators and students.

Considering these odds, the participants in this training acknowledged that incorporating restorative justice practices in schools could be a possibility to: engage more the students from those who are struggling to those who are engaged. The inclusivity and support found in this method entail that students with disabilities or with issues like substance abuse could be involved and encouraged to participate, socialise, control impulses and to learn social skills.

This opportunity to learn from wrongdoings and conflicts is achieved by separating the deed from the doer and show disapproval of the action and not the performer of such action.

Following this intense discussion on restorative principles and what are the circumstances that determine the application of restorative justice and how this can help improving the school ambience, the second day of the training looked at the methods that educators can use in order to elicit students to participate and get involved in these practices. Some of the most important points were:

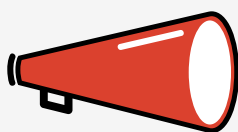


- Involving the students at different stages of the process was considered to be fundamental.

- Very important to develop these trusting and caring relationships between students and together with their educators even before conflicts occurred.



- Trust and care could prevent the occurrence of a conflict and also can facilitate the reconciliatory process between the two conflicting parties.



- With the use of open-ended questions that focus mainly on 'what has happened?' the restorative practices aim at exploring ways to amend the outcomes of misbehaviour while encouraging reflection and the application of reparative behaviour.



- Common elements that shroud the success of restorative justice programmes in schools include discretion, willingness to accept responsibility, voluntary participation and confidentiality and this should be applied at different levels which include teachers, administrators and naturally students.

In implementing restorative justice practices in schools, the trainees were rendered conscious that they need to adapt the vocabulary and also their meetings with the class and/or involved parties. The terminology used to address the involved parties should be adapted so as not induce labels on those students who have caused harm and on those students that have been harmed.

The participants were shown the use of circles, mediation, conferencing and peer jury are useful in resolving conflicts. Though all these methods of administering restorative justice practices are valuable, the circles, or peace-making circles were considered the most suitable to address issues and resolve conflicts in Maltese schools.

The forming of circles in classroom were considered to be included as part of the agenda as it would facilitate in improving communication skills that helped students in learning, understanding and respecting each other besides solving conflicts.



In the third meeting the trainees had to present how they intended to start to include restorative justice principles, as well as how the aim at overcoming the encountered difficulties.

The third meeting occurred almost a month after the first two lectures and the participants formed three groups that brought four presentations, which looked at different aspects and practices of restorative justice.



By the end of the session, restorative practices were identified as a method that can :

- help create a sense of community especially since schools are becoming more multicultural;
- help to disseminate equality and acceptance (particularly of differences);
- increase the spectrum of actions that could be taken by the educators besides the disciplinary ones.

METHOD USED

- Training sessions with interactive sessions in mediation and restorative practices for teaching/non-teaching staff
- Drama in education and hot seating for students
- PSCD – Lesson plans for students
- Peer Mediation training for students
- Exchange of good practices for practitioners



EXPECTATIONS

The four interventions which targeted the student population managed first to sensitise the students through the anti-bullying play which portrayed a number of bullying behaviour, including cyberbullying. This was followed by a discussion with the characters and later on by a three-week programme with three lesson plans and finally a non-formal workshop. All this was done with aim of changing the perception about bullying and cyberbullying at individual and classroom/school level which would, in turn, reduce the victimisation and the engagement in such behaviours.

The expectation of the restorative practices training was to make the participating educators more conscious, aware and knowledgeable of the restorative practices and how these could be applied within the school environment. The presentations and the discussions on the potential hindrances in implementing more restorative practices at different stages of school years show that participants dedicated some serious time in the potential implementation of restorative practices within their respective schools.

The Peer mediators training was specifically tailored for students, included mainly interactive practices to strengthen their involvement and active participation. Throughout the training, it became obvious that the personal motivation of the students was very important.

School staff was expected to have the opportunity to be involved and willing to invest time in planning the activities or incorporating them in their scholastic activity, however an overburden of the whole education system prevented this from happening.

CHALLENGES

- Participation to the training provided through the ASAP Programme was voluntary, thus high attendance was not guaranteed. In addition, not all school staff received permission to attend during working hours;
- Identifying appropriate times and dates for all participants to be available proved to be another issue;
- Difficulty to disseminate the information in order to reach the target group in a timely manner;
- Delays at project level among partners affected the timely communication with the local participants;



The taster session in restorative practices, held in Hungary, was very insightful however at times too difficult to understand or adapt to the local situation, due to the trainer's lack of knowledge about the Maltese School System. This was however balanced by ensuring that the training held in Malta was provided by a Maltese professional.

During the second training in restorative practices, participants identified various challenges to a feasible implementation of restorative practices in Maltese schools, such as:

- management and administrative priorities which do not allow for new initiatives;
- financial difficulties;
- time pressures to fulfil the curricula as expected by the department of education.

The Peer mediation group from Malta, Student for Student Support Team, was at times faced with resistance at School level, from teachers and members of SMT's, which discouraged them. Another challenge that they faced was not being allocated a space where to conduct their activity from the beginning of the scholastic year, but only later on towards the end of the second semester. The lack of resources at school level was proven also through an argument that erupted between a group of teachers and the students, whom both wanted to have access to the same space, to conduct extracurricular activities

With regards to the Drama Unit performance, the biggest challenge was the coordination between the SMT's, Drama Unit and Anti-bullying Guidance teachers. Due to the number of students in each group, supervision was needed and it was not always easy to rely on the teachers to help with supervision. The student population especially in two of the four schools includes a high number of students who are not Maltese Native speakers and who were still not proficient in the language. Therefore understanding the performance was more difficult for them, however, teachers did volunteer to do a live interpretation in English for the students who had difficulties understanding. Some teachers refused to do such an exercise.

OUTCOMES

Each element of the ASAP Model Programme had different targeted outcomes

1. The Peer mediators from Pembroke Secondary identified as a group and became the "Student For Student Support team", focusing on more than just mediation, but also offering support to their fellow classmates and schoolmates, under the guidance of their Anti-Bullying Guidance Teacher and the Kellimni.com team.

The SMT's with help from the Anti-bullying Guidance Teacher eventually allocated a room to the "Student for Student Support Team" in the school, where they set up their office. The students were also provided with personalised imprinted t-shirts which matched the

the back. The Student for Student Support team became well known among practitioners through their participation to the final ASAP conference where they facilitated an entire workshop together with their supervisor.

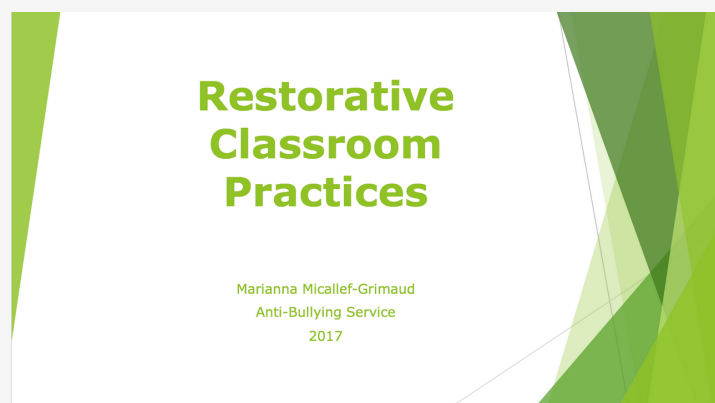


The students made efforts to promote their service through presentations and small performances of different mediation scenarios. They were also assisted to create their own video, as a trademark for their work. The video can be watched following this link.

2. The participants to the Restorative Practices training planned to forward restorative justice practices:

1. through College meetings;
2. to start using restorative practices from the early days of school;
3. educators who are with children everyday need to be trained in these practices before taking action to instil a healthier atmosphere at school;
4. to find new ways to: heal and mediate the perpetrators and victims; deal with challenging behaviour and bullying;
5. to minimise labelling;
6. to give weight to everyone's version (particularly when an incident takes place);
7. to increase the individual understanding among students and between students and educators and also to increase the individual accountability and responsibility.

During the training provided to the Maltese teaching and non-teaching staff on Restorative practices, they prepared a series of presentations on ways they were implementing or planning to implement the methodology at the school level. The first presentation, Restorative classroom practices aimed at introducing restorative practices and spreading the knowledge on these methods. The focus was mainly on the use of the circle as the main practice within schools.



Another presentation, entitled Restorative practices at Maria Regina College Naxxar Middle School, looked at the current implementation of restorative practices in that particular school.

The activities were aimed at the students and explored the creation of a restorative set of classroom rules. This was done through a number of scenarios which were roleplayed leading to a discussion on the potential outcomes of the given scenarios. The questions posed to students delved into feelings, preventive methods, potential consequences derived from new regulations and other related topics. The student looked at involving more guidance teachers and discuss once the situation was calm. Also, the student stressed apologising face-to-face, which some students admitted it is quite hard.

The third presentation entitled Friendship looked at the value of friendship and the acceptance of differences. Furthermore, it focused on empathy with the different feelings friends might experience. This presentation was designed as a class intervention on restorative justice using a case study, of a bullying situation involving a Sicilian girl as the victim. It provided various restorative methods - such as circle time, discussion using friendship cards, letter of apology and cultural events- to provide different methods to make amends between the conflicting parties.

Other activities were carried out in the individual schools separately from the framework of the ASAP project but as part of the regular activities of the school and the Anti-Bullying Service. For example informative talks about the legal implications of cyberbullying by the Malta Cyber Crime Unit, individual case management based on the national referral system, class and school level interventions.

USEFUL TIPS

Flexibility and support from the principals and heads of school

When conflicts emerge, there is a specific time frame for the alternative procedures to be implemented for both the professionals and the parties involved (students, teachers, parents). This needs flexibility and support from the SMT's, and have to be based on common and widely accepted and known procedures.

Sharing the responsibility

Training in mediation can be very useful if followed through with an appropriate mentorship programme, both for students and teaching/non-teaching staff.

A strict selection of who can take part in the trainings/activities

Because of different student age - related needs, it is especially important to define the competencies necessary to make them able to intervene and mediate in difficult cases.

Involve the SMT's and Directorate for Student Services in the developing of the tools and trainings

Because teachers have such a tight schedule and cannot be involved in extra-curricular activities, a comprehensive module could be developed at national level, to meet their needs in tackling and preventing bullying and aggressive behaviour.

In this chapter you are going to read about the tools used for the assessment of the programme.

STARTING POINT

The assessment phase of the implementation was mainly based on the questionnaires that were disseminated to the students, teaching/non-teaching staff and parents. The information collected through the questionnaires was used to develop the programme but also to measure its effectiveness.

While the ASAP project ended in summer 2018, the ASAP Model Programme continues to be implemented through the Anti-Bullying play and lesson plans provided for the PSCD lessons at national level, but also through the knowledge and skills acquired by professionals who will be able to work actively and advocate further for the introduction and consolidation of alternative conflict resolution techniques at school level in Malta.

METHODS USED

The questionnaires were disseminated to students and parents as hard-copies and only the teaching/non-teaching staff were given the option to fill in the questionnaire online.

Questionnaires were also disseminated at the end of the training provided for teaching and non-teaching staff, with the aim to assess the training provided.

Periodic meetings were held between SOS Malta and the Anti-Bullying Service, the Student for Student Support team and the project was ended with an international exchange, where two participants from Malta also had the chance to share and discuss the Implementation of the ASAP Model Programme in Malta.

EXPECTATION

The ASAP Model Programme implementation proved to be very different between the three countries, as well as between the four schools who participated in the programme in Malta. The main expectations were to:

- pave the way for alternative conflict resolution approaches,
- raise awareness about the topics and incite interest among stakeholders,
- support and complement already existing practices, and
- to bring together different practitioners working with the same student community.

Supporting the Anti-Bullying Service was another the main expectations of the ASAP Model Programme. The service is understaffed and has a few resources available. Also, training opportunities are not frequent and the overwhelming number of referrals - individual cases - make it difficult for the members of the unit to attend training courses and improve their professional skills.

CHALLENGES

The lack of availability for extracurricular activities in the schools, due to systemic changes and lack of staff, and also a focus on academic achievement which is a priority for all schools, prevented for more activities to take place.

The school calendar is always prepared before the previous year ends, which means that the planning of the process of implementation has to be done way in advance. This was not always possible for a project that had to align the implementation in three different countries and nine school contexts.

The dissemination of the questionnaires was challenging due to the lengthy process of developing the questionnaire in the first place. The questions were the same for all three countries, thus had to be adjusted accordingly to fit the different needs and contexts. Due to this delay, the Action Plans of implementation were delayed and eventually some of the sessions also had to be adjusted or even cancelled.

The software used for the inputting and analysis of the data was Survey Monkey, where all questionnaires were filled in manually after collection. This was also a challenge due to the lengthy process of filling in the questionnaires

The alternative conflict resolution methods were very well received by the ones who received the trainings, however it was difficult to spread the principles across departments and different stakeholders without having a training for the whole school population.

Despite the challenges one has to try and keep a realistic view in evaluating the results of the assessment. The members of a community who have been educated in a completely different approach cannot be sensitised towards such alternative topics at once or with the same intensity. The change in perspective and even more, the change in practice is a sinuous road where the meaning of success is relative.

OUTCOME

The members of the Anti-Bullying Service proved to be the most active and impacted group from all school staff. They participated in a large number to all the trainings, and also used their skills and expertise to develop parts of the Model Programme.

With this in mind the ASAP Model Programme implementation can be considered successful, for managing to complement the already existed initiatives and creating a synergy between services and departments.

Having the Student Services as an active partner in the project also ensured a better sustainability of the programme especially with the lesson plans and anti-bullying play included in the National Handbook for PSCD.

SOS Malta also continued the work on restorative practices through the development of a certified course which will be done in partnership with educational institutions and other partners, targeting directly practitioners.

For the final assessment, 546 students, 111 teaching/non-teaching staff and 211 parents responded to the questionnaire. The basic trends about bullying behaviour, school climate, reporting and frequency did not change substantially. There were both negative and positive developments.

With a raise in awareness about different types of behaviour and a decrease in the prevalence in physical and verbal bullying in particular, more students feel comfortable to reach out and discuss their experience in case they are involved in bullying behaviour. However the overall school climate did not seem to have improved.

USEFUL TIPS

Adapt interventions to the actual needs of the school

The ASAP Model Programme was a pilot testing, which proved to be very useful in terms of flexibility, with different methods and tools that can be easily adapted according to the needs of the school.

Develop a partnership with the teachers and parents

While the implementation in Malta had a larger focus on students and professionals, the teachers and parents were not so present. This was due to difficulties in reaching them, and finding times when they would be willing or available to participate in activities.

Resource for the implementation

The implementation of the model programme -among other things - needs financial resources. Generally, the school's own budget cannot afford to finance it, however financial alternatives are offered by different EU funding streams or even local funding.

Patience

The implementation of the model programme -among other things - needs financial resources. Generally, the school's own budget cannot afford to finance it, so it is worth looking for other resources. Such options are offered by different EU funding streams or even local funding.

Include more training and skill development for teachers

Staff were asked whether or not they feel better enabled and supported to handle aggressive and bullying behaviours (by means of school policies, trainings at school etc.) as a result of the model program. 17% of the staff said that they did and another 17% reported that they did not. However, 66% reported that they did, but only to a certain extent, confirming that the model programme did very well in raising awareness, but it needs to include more hands-on, practical tools and training.

Overall, the Model Programme should include the following elements in the future:

1. more supervision, heightened adult presence;
2. more practical solutions for staff, students, and parents;
3. more hands-on workshops for all three groups;
4. open dialogue sessions between staff and parents;
5. open dialogue sessions between staff, parents, and students;
6. higher investment in the Anti-Bullying Unit and a stronger presence of the staff members of the unit in schools;
7. online anti-bullying training and materials for staff;
8. earlier anti-bullying awareness training for students as young as kindergarten age;
9. workshops and events for students should be interactive in order to ensure students are absorbing the contents;
10. practical and applicable alternative conflict resolution tactics, such as Restorative Practices;
11. better involvement of parents;
12. consistent and regular training for all three groups of participants;
13. the fostering of open dialogue between parents and schools;
14. improved channels of reporting such behaviour for students, whether anonymous or not.