



Macedonia Makes Civics a National Standard

Challenge

Participatory democracy is not a Macedonian tradition. Citizens inherited a political culture of passivity which has been exacerbated by the limited opportunities to influence government initiatives. Macedonia's transition from socialism has also been afflicted with ethnic tensions and widespread skepticism about government's capacity and motives.



Photo: Catholic Relief Services

Students at a regional Project Citizen competition.

“The civic education program is exactly what our students need in this state of transition of our country and our educational system.”

***- Golubina Gorgjievska,
leader of the Civic
Education Working
Group***

has been rolled out to all the elementary schools in Macedonia including 5th and 6th grades, and text has been published for younger children in Macedonian, Albanian, and Turkish. In 2004, the Bureau of Educational Development of Macedonia will add civic education curriculum as the third subject, in addition to mathematics and language, with national standards to support the measurement of students' achievement.

Initiative

USAID introduced the youngest students in Macedonia to the rights and responsibilities of democracy including the concepts of transparency, cooperative participation, and respect for diversity. USAID helped fund the creation of the Foundations of Democracy curriculum for grades 1-4, and Project Citizen program for grades 5 and 6. Project Citizen students confront a real problem and develop a plan to resolve it, as well as prepare a portfolio displaying their work and compete in regional exhibitions.

As part of the program, 5th grade students in the Kole Nedelkovski elementary school challenged the traffic conditions that had created serious safety concerns and had curtailed use of the school's playground. They met with local businesses, invited television coverage, and made a personal presentation to the mayor of Skopje. Their efforts prompted the city to control traffic and illegal parking allowing the students to regain the use of their playground.

Results

The student successes, including the Kole Nedelkovski school playground, and the importance of citizen participation, has gained official acceptance for the civic education course in the country. The civics course has been enthusiastically endorsed by the Macedonia Ministry of Education and Sciences. Starting with 120 pilot schools, the civics curriculum

