



Learning exchange Activities between Info Com Youth of Guelma and March (May 2017)

The learning exchange is a process of peer-to-peer exchanges between associations working for gender equality which consists in sharing experiences and working methods to favor mutual enrichment, synergies and networking. Through a field visit and mutual exchange of lessons learned, each association acquires new skills to promote changes in its political and social environment.

The learning exchanges happen within the framework of the CSO WINS project: "Capacity-building in the Southern Mediterranean to Open policy dialogue and monitoring for Women in Society", financed by the European Union and co-financed by the European Institute of the Mediterranean, coordinator of the project.

Who is Info Com Youth Association of Guelma?

Info Com Youth of Guelma was founded in 1996 to educate young people on issues such as violence and harassment in public places, particularly women, but also on health and sexuality and about drug abuses. Info Com works in particular on small projects, **institutional and associative partnerships**, and **activities based on the volunteering** of its members. Its current director is Dr. Lotfi Adjabi, himself a former young member of the association. **Involving the young people themselves** in this dynamic of associative work is the real innovative work of this NGO in the region, through the training of educators, parents of pupils but also through open discussions with parents of young people.

In a preventive framework, **addressing** the sexual and reproductive health **needs of young people** is still a taboo subject in Algeria, and this is why the association has helped to communicate on these issues to young people in order **to inform** them of the risks of unprotected sexual activities, but also on the use of drugs. On the other hand, Info Com is trying **to raise awareness** amongst young people regarding the major issue of violence against women in public places. The aim is to highlight **the rights and duties of young men and women** in the Guelma region and to contribute to a better life together.

Who is March?

MARCH was founded in 2011 to empower Lebanese civil society through freedom of expression. MARCH's mission is to **educate, motivate and empower citizens**, to recognize and defend their basic civil rights, to build a tolerant and open Lebanese society in order to promote **diversity and equality**, and to achieve genuine reconciliation between the different

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communities. Engaged in civic responsibility, MARCH seeks to promote active solidarity among citizens in Lebanese society.

In its current strategy and projects, MARCH focuses on the **struggle for the right to freedom of expression and the fight against censorship**, as illustrated by the inauguration of the second censorship museum organized at Phoenicia's University in southern Lebanon, on May 24, where all the censored works in Lebanon since 1943 have been registered and collected from books, music, to films, and many other artistic works. In fact, MARCH continues **to fight for the recognition of women's rights** in Lebanon, **in partnership with the IEMed** foundation and other activist NGOs, and through awareness-raising campaigns on violence against women.

Moreover, MARCH is actively working on the issue of stateless persons in Lebanon, which concerns both Syrian refugees and Lebanese people, often on the margins of society. Finally, MARCH's major work in the recent months has focused on **resolving conflicts** in Lebanon, particularly in the cities of Tripoli and Beirut and its surroundings. Indeed, with the "Souk Bebel Dahab" festival in Bebel Tebbenneh and Jabal Mohsen in northern Lebanon, March chose to continue its long work of healing conflicts between the Alawite minority present in Jabal Mohsen and the Sunnis of Bebel Tebbenneh, launching a reconstruction project of the businesses in the street that separates the two districts and which has suffered the consequences of **several years of conflicts**. The festival, which took place on April 29, 2017, completes this ambitious project in Tripoli, but also launches new horizons for this area burdened with a heavy past.

Finally, MARCH has just completed a four-part tour of the "Hona Beirut" play, directed by Yehia Jaber in Beirut, describing the bitter sweet story of young people in the disadvantaged neighbourhoods of Beirut and its suburbs, their daily lives, punctuated by discrimination and clichés inherited from the **Civil War**. This play is an ode to reconciliation between young people of different religions and of different origins.

Campaign against sexual harassment and violence in public places

Despite **the progressive legislation in Algeria, incorporating women's rights**, as shown by the compulsory quota of women in legislative and local elections, as well as several articles of legislation, in particular articles 333. Bis2, Bis3 and 341. Bis of the amended penal code on 30/12/2015 sanctions against verbal violence and sexual harassment against women in public places, there is still a need for **societal work** to be provided, particularly in Guelma. On a daily basis, despite these laws, violence and harassment of girls and young women in public places are rarely denounced and declared. Unfortunately, families often prefer not to complain, and punish the girl herself by depriving her of going to school, especially if educational institutions are far away, and forbidding her to thrive by practicing sporting, cultural and in order to avoid further violence.

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INFO COM's current advocacy project in partnership with MARCH: "Let's live better all together, Respect the girls" is a real success. The objective is to communicate on the new modified law which criminalizes verbal violence and sexual harassment in public places with the aim to encourage the victims to denounce this form of violence and to reduce sexual violence in Guelma province.

To achieve this objective, INFO-COM is implementing awareness-raising activities targeting the media, political and influential figures at local level and the heads of sport and cultural associations and educational institutions. In addition to that, an online petition against sexual harassment and verbal violence and outreach activities (distribution of flyers, sport and musical events) targeting young men and women are also organized.

The field visit, the culmination of the learning exchange:

The meeting between the NGO MARCH and Info Com Jeunes de Guelma, which took place between 26 and 30 March 2017 in Beirut, made it possible to launch a **partnership between the two associations and to promote the right of women with a crossed glance, between two shores of the Mediterranean Sea**. Despite the different context between Lebanon and Algeria, working with and around young people in these two countries is fundamentally important for both NGOs. The meeting with Dr. Lotfi Adjabi, director of the Info Com association, and Zeinab Arteil, Project Coordinator at MARCH was very enriching at all levels: exchanges of expertise, particularly in terms of communication, use of TICs, on cultural projects to strengthen the implication of youth...

Thanks to this field visit, MARCH team allows the two associations to consider joint actions in the future, such as a project of intercultural exchange between the youth of the two countries and graphic design trainings monitored by MARCH.

The priority of the themes addressed during the field visit consists of questions of communication, campaigns, and of inspiration for new projects for youth, and made by youth. This learning exchange organized by the IEMed, which promotes gender equality and the empowerment of women, aims to strengthen the Mediterranean partners, associations and NGOs, who work on common issues to improve the impact of campaigns and to learn from each other's experiences. The IEMed enabled INFO COM and MARCH to broaden their perspective on the situation of women in the Maghreb - Middle East region, also to broaden the place of the young people, and the best ways to help develop projects with and for them.

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Through the **exchange of experience and advice** between Info Com and MARCH, and with **the help of the IEMed**, the campaign has started very well and continues to evolve and reach more and more young people. It should also be noted that this campaign to fight verbal violence and harassment of young girls in public places in Guelma, Algeria, was accompanied on the month of May by a training workshop on citizenship and youth sensitization on harassment issues, in **partnership** with the Youth and Sport Direction (DJS) et Youth establishment office of Guelma (ODEJ), and founded by the **European Union**.

Thus, one can notice the very good involvement of the institutional partners and the local authorities of Guelma for the smooth running of the project and the success of our advocacy campaign, which is due to the end of July 2017.

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