Center for Development of Effective Communication «Human Library»

2014 - 2019 Report

Human Library is more than a format!
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We develop a society based on equality, inclusion, non-discrimination and tolerance through effective communication between different social groups and increasing their visibility.
We stand firm on our position that all people are equal in rights and human dignity, with no regard for their personal differences (race, gender, religion, sexuality, nationality, etc.).

No difference can be a ground for human rights limitation and humiliation. It is important to respect the diversity of people and their right to differ from one another.

We want that everyone could have access to the social sphere without any obstacles and barriers.
HISTORY AND ACHIEVEMENTS

2014 - 2015

11.10
The first Human Library took place in Minsk. More than 50 people participated in the event.

20.02
The first Human Library was organized in Hrodna by local team.

24.04
120 people attended Human Library during Library Night event in National Technical University who made quite a long queue to registration desk.

Summer
Maryna Shtrahava, Maryia Lukashuk and Volha Artsiomchyk developed an action plan for Human Library format during the Academy of The First program by BNYC RADA.
We progressed to the quarter-final of Social Weekend 7

**Spring**

24.04 The first Human Library in Maladziechna was organized by the local team

23.09 The first Human Library was hosted in Babruisk in 1387 time-club, later the main local organiser of the format

25.11 For the first time we together with PA Radislava conducted a new event's format Frank Conversations with domestic violence as a topic

4.12 The first Human Library was organized in Vitsiebsk by the local team

11.12 We received the Zrabilii! award

17.12 We won the «Youth in informal education» RADA Awards
Our web-site was launched (humanlibrary.by)

We officially registered as Center (establishment) and found an office

Our participation in Freaky Summer Party (FSP), our first big festival

The first Human Library was held in Brest by the local team

We joined the Assembly of NGOs in Belarus

We joined BNYC RADA

Designer Nastassia Zienovich created our Center’s brandbook

Human Library Vitsiebsk team won the «Regional youth initiative / project» RADA Awards
January
«Human Library: organisation guidebook» was published
13.01
The Zrabili! award in nomination «Project / Idea worth multiplying»

Summer
Our Strategy till 2021 was created! Our mission, values and activity directions were formulated in it

Autumn
We monitored Minsk public spaces from the perspective of accessibility for different social groups. The monitoring was our first step in inclusion activity direction

Autumn 2018 - Spring 2019
The team conducted an organizational development
2019

July

«Believe-or-Not» board game’s demo

08.10
Our first LARP within The Week Against Death Penalty was organised

11.10
In the culture center Korpus we celebrated our 5th birthday under the slogan «We are five — high-five!»

02.11
We held All Inclusive forum of inclusive practices exchange which began as the same name initiative carried in cooperation with OEEC and CityDog.by

07.12
A big Human Library dedicated to Human Rights Day was organised in cooperation with the UN and Watch Docs Belarus film festival

19.07
The first Human Library in Barysau was organised by BFSCO Province and youth club Be yourself!

25.07
The First General Meeting of Supporters of the establishment was organised. The new Board was elected

21.12
The first Human Library was hosted in Mazyr by First Step space
8500+
people have attended our events during 5 years

40+
Human Libraries have been organised in Minsk

270+
people have attended our biggest Human Library
LARP organized 120+ volunteers

Human Libraries
have been organised by local teams and our partners in other cities

100+ regional teams active

11 Supporters

8 activity formats
18 000 + people have visited our website
5 projects within Erasmus+
700 + Human Books
200 samples of «Human Library: organisation guidebook» manual published
50 cards in «Believe-or-Not» board game
1,440+
BYN has been received as a support from You (since 2017)

137
steps to the office

75+
articles about Human Books

300,000+
people have read articles about our Human Books on CityDog.by
ACTIVITIES

- Increasing the visibility of different social groups
- Non-formal youth education
- Increasing spaces and events’ accessibility for the wide range of vulnerable groups
Increasing the visibility of different social groups

The visibility of different social groups in public space is very important for us. Awareness of different people’s experience is the first step towards social inclusion because it encourages everyone to participate actively in public life. When people are present in public space, it’s difficult to say they «don’t exist» and ignore their opinion.
For increasing the visibility of people who represent the groups facing stereotypes and discrimination in our society we cooperate with different media that collect the stories of these people.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>17 articles</th>
<th>9 articles</th>
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<td>In August, 2016 we started cooperating with <strong>the flight magazine OnAir</strong> owned by Belavia air company.</td>
<td>In October, 2016 we started working together with <strong>Belarusian Magazine</strong> online-magazine.</td>
<td>Since June, 2017 <strong>Citydog.by online-magazine</strong> has been our good friend and information partner.</td>
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Articles about our Human Books have also appeared on:

- Green portal,
- local Brest media Notebook,
- sites dev.by,
- Hrodna.LIFE,
- Minsk-News news agency,
- ex-press.by etc.

According to our data, more than **450 000 people** have read the articles.

Our work is not limited to increasing visibility of discriminated groups by creating articles. We strive to make different people visible not only on the Internet but in everyday life as well with our different activities.
The Human Library has become the hallmark of our Center. It was our first format, and since then we have been organising it for 5 years.

We started with event for 6-8 Books that were «read» by 40-50 people once a month. With increased demand from the audience the scale of the events grew. Finally, the format has reached 20+ Human Books and 120+ Readers per event in Minsk. That’s when we decided to cut down the number of Human Libraries to 1 per 3 months.

The Human Library is one of the favourite formats of our team and audience. And it’s proved by numbers. In these years 140 Human Libraries were organised in Belarus (including 40+ in Minsk) and more than 8500 people attended it.
The Human Library is not an ordinary library. Instead of books there are people who tell their stories, and they are eager to answer your question.

The Book is a person of a certain identity: a rare job, unique life experience, uncommon for the majority lifestyle or outlook, and a person who faces stereotypes.

During the Human Library Readers (attendees of the event) can join Human Books’ 25-30 minutes talks to hear their story and try to understand their experience.
FRANK CONVERSATIONS
Until autumn 2016, we were organising only the Human Libraries and were getting lots of offers for partnership. Most of them had a narrow topic such as «Let’s hold the Human Library about people with disabilities». But no matter how interesting were topics, we have never agreed, because one of the most important principles of the Human Library is to show the diversity in society.

At some point we got tired of rejecting cool organisations and initiatives and discovered a new format of communication — the Frank Conversations.

The Frank Conversations — is an event format aimed at learning and deep understanding of one certain topic.

As well as the Human Library, the format is based on communication. Participants have 25-30 minutes to talk in a small group with Heroes who present the topic from different perspectives.

In autumn 2016 we organised the first Frank Conversations about domestic violence in partnership with PA Radzislava. Since then we have worked with organisations and initiatives dealing with gender issues and former prisoners of concentration camps. Also we made talks on Down’s syndrome, arts, after-graduation compulsory work and inclusion.
SOCIAL GAME
Working with the mentioned two formats (the Human Library and the Frank Conversations), we realised that they were not enough to make systematic changes and attract a wider range of people to our activities. So we took up working on new formats that would help people to understand others, and finally, at the beginning of 2018, we created «Another view» social game.

«Another view» — is an interactive social game during which participants play roles of different people and make decisions on the questions proposed by the moderator.

Here’s the example of participants’ roles: «a girl who graduated in the USA», «a refugee from Syria», «a HIV positive person», «a 24-year-old gay», etc.

During 2018 - 2019 we organised 7 games in different cities. The format gives an opportunity to walk a mile in someone else’s shoes, overthink one’s own «roles», and learn about the problems other people face in their daily lives and emotions they feel.
The growth of our team and activities led to a girl named Lara joining us. She was fond of LARPs and believed in their capacity to change people’s attitude toward one another and different social issues.

**LARP** (Live Action Role Play) is a mixture of improvisation theatre, role play, and drama scenes where players create reality. There is no audience or players actions’ evaluation in LARPs. **Personal experience is the most important part of LARPs.**

Our Center’s first LARP was held on October 8, 2019 within The Week Against Death Penalty. And it was dedicated to the problem of capital punishment. The presence or absence of death penalty reflects humanity of the society. Our LARP makes people not only determine their position on the death penalty, but also consider the essence and consequences of this type of punishment in any country.
BOARD GAME «BELIEVE-OR-NOT»
Developing interactive activities and experimenting with new products for our organisation, with combating stereotypes as a goal in mind, we created a board game.

«Believe-or-Not» is a set of 50 cards with different statistic facts about Belarus and Belarussian society; some of them are true, while others are false.

The task is to guess which facts are true and say «I believe» or «I don’t believe». Then the participants are told the correct answers with comments.

The game suits any event and any company.

Fact: Belarus is at the third place in the list of the most racist European countries (true).
Fact: three out of five people with disabilities aged from 18 to 35 can’t find a job (true).
Fact: 1 out of 1600 children has an autism spectrum disorder (false, the true number is 1 of 160).

Fact: «Believe-or-Not» never leaves people indifferent.
Increasing accessibility of spaces and events for a wide range of vulnerable groups.
Inclusion is engagement of vulnerable groups in social life.

Inclusion has been our core value since we founded the initiative and later it has grown into one of our activity directions.
In autumn 2018 we did the research of accessibility of public places in Minsk for different social groups. The aim was to figure out the current state and reasons for (in)accessibility of different places in the city. Shortly after we started the research, we realised that inclusion would become one of our main directions of work. For example, we learned that:

- 2 of 15 spaces have a wheelchair accessible entrance
- 1 of 15 spaces has a changing table
- 1 of 15 spaces has an accessible entrance for people with visual impairments

All spaces got recommendations on increasing their level of inclusion, and since then we have been providing a service of accessibility measuring and consulting.
In autumn, 2019 the forum of inclusive practices All inclusive, became a significant event which gathered more than 80 civil and state sectors representatives, as well as businesses interested in inclusion in Belarus.

Besides the exchange of inclusive practices and networking during the forum we discussed social responsibility of businesses, promotion of cross-cutting values and creation of an inclusive environment.

The event founded a big initiative All inclusive that we continue together with Office for European expertise and Communications and online-magazine Citydog.by.
Supporters

saharok

Kseniya Syramalot

Viktoryja Parechyna

Lara Yakushevich

Volha Shanchuk

Volha Vuntsevich

*For 31.12.2019 all the Board Members are also Supporters of the establishment*
The Center has its regional teams and partners in Babruisk, Barysau, Brest, Vitsiebsk, Hrodna, Mazyr, Maladziechna. They organise not only the Human Libraries, but also other non-formal education formats. Our teams and partners have also organised events in Homel, Mahiliou, Navapolatsk, Navasady and at Vilieyskaye Water Reservoir.

The Volunteer Team for 31.12.2019 consists of more than 25 people. As a rule, the volunteers are assigned to certain tasks, such as SMM or design, as well as assistance during our online and offline events. Our volunteer team is constantly growing. We provide trainings and educational workshops for our volunteers.

We are incredibly grateful to each and every volunteer for their input in organisation development and movement toward achieving our mission!
SUPPORT

Since 2017 we have received more than 1440 BYN support from You. This amount covers only a part of the organisation’s (office rent, bills, accountant, bank expenses, website maintenance, etc.) and events’ (rent, publishing, coffee breaks, etc.) expenses.

We are grateful to everyone who donated our work!

Just in several clicks you can support us on our [website].
We believe that only together with other people, initiatives and organisations we can change this world faster and more effectively for the better!

That is why we are always happy to get involved in big joint events. For example, we have already taken part in many festivals:

- MovaFest
- «Kilometer of Civil Activity»
- Volunteer Fest
- Week for Equality and Inclusion
- Viva Braslav 2019
- «OUR DAY»
- «City and Books» 2018
- Educational Week against Fascism and Antisemitism
- Freaky Summer Party 2017 and 2018
In 5 years we have created and maintained lots of connections with outstanding people, initiatives and organisations all over the country. Some of them cooperated with us on a regular basis, others we met only once. This is not a full list of all partners and supporters we have been working with during 5 years, but we’ve done our best making it and we’re sorry if your name is missing.

We are sincerely grateful for your activities, cooperation with us and your work that changes Belarus for the better!
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