

URA GRODNO: TOGETHER WE CAN DO MORE!

H. Bohdan¹, O. Kolodko², V. Kremleva³

¹Secondary school №12 of Grodno, Belarus, 230010 Grodno, 106 – 21 Kleckov Street, e-mail bohdan61@inbox.ru

²Secondary school №12 of Grodno, Belarus, 230024 Grodno, 32 Popovich Street, e-mail olga_kolodko@tut.by

³Department of Ecology of Yanka Kupala State University of Grodno, supervisor of the Environmental Initiative “URA Grodno!”, Belarus, 230009 Grodno, 229 – 72/2 Yanka Kupala Street, e-mail omor@grsu.by

Key words: environmental monitoring, improvement of environmental management, innovations

The experience of participation of the secondary school № 12 in Grodno in the implementation of the local environmental initiative “URA Grodno!”, which is a part of the project “Public involvement in environmental monitoring and improvement of environmental management at the local level”, funded by the EU and implemented by UNDP in partnership with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Belarus, is presented. A description of innovations and effective tools and brief characteristics of the most significant events of the initiative are given.

Continuity and succession, as well as the inclusive participation of each participant in the interaction, are important provisions in Education for Sustainable Development (hereinafter – ESD). Environmental education enables them under certain conditions.

In secondary school №12 in Grodno the organization of ESD practices is based on an open educational environment and support for children’s and youth initiatives. The first allows for attracting out-of-school specialists and preserving the continuity and succession of environmental education in the age range 3 - 80 years old. The second not only motivates participants to care for the result, but also promotes participation in the development of useful cases and achievement of meaningful results.

One of the prime examples of this approach is the development and implementation of the local environmental initiative “URA Grodno!”

The idea of creating a multicenter for environmental education and monitoring, which arose in the intellectual association “Prudent Masters’ School” of secondary school № 12 in Grodno, was reborn into a joint environmental initiative of Yanka Kupala State University of Grodno (applicant of the initiative), Secondary School No. 12 in Grodno (partner of initiative 1), Kindergarten No. 45 in Grodno (partner of initiative 2), Association “Education for Sustainable Development” (partner of the initiative 3) under the title: “Inclusive environmental

management by motivated inclusion of the residents of the city of Grodno in the development and implementation of measures aimed at improving the quality of the environment and monitoring environmental risks, in the context of the educational multicenter for comprehensive support of the environmentally friendly lifestyle of local communities "URA Grodno!" ("Sustainable Development – Grodno Activity" or "URA Grodno!" for short).

The initiative was recognized as the winner of the competition for environmental initiatives in the project "Public involvement in environmental monitoring and improvement of environmental management at the local level", funded by the EU and implemented by UNDP in partnership with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Belarus (hereinafter referred to as the Project).

"URA Grodno!" has been successfully implemented with the support of this project in 2019 – 2021.

The participation of all three institutions in the work of the Education for Sustainable Development Association allowed them to become partners in a large-scale environmental start-up, agree on interaction, expand and complement each other's capabilities and get the expected result.

The goal of the initiative is inclusive environmental management by motivated inclusion of Grodno residents in the development and implementation of measures aimed at improving the quality of the environment and monitoring environmental risks, in the context of the educational multicenter for comprehensive support of the environmentally friendly lifestyle of local communities "URA Grodno!", creation of an educational multicenter that ensures the continuity of environmental education at the stages of "kindergarten – school – university" and the involvement of a large number of Grodno residents in the implementation of environmentally significant events and actions.

The initiative is based on the idea of a "green office" created on the basis of an open demonstration platform by three institutions. The well-organized educational environment of the "green office" allows you to efficiently use your own resources and thereby save the resources of the planet.

The main innovative instrument of the initiative is the open educational multicenter "URA Grodno", which includes eight mini-centers located on the basis of partner institutions:

Yanka Kupala State University of Grodno:

- Laboratory of environmental monitoring.

State Educational Institution "Kindergarten No. 45 of Grodno":

- Mini-center "Little Meteorologist";
- Mini-center "Ecology and Health".

State Educational Institution "Secondary School No. 12 of Grodno":

- Mini-center "Green Workshops";
- Mini-center "Green Foyer";
- Mini-center "Green class";
- Mini-center "Energy";
- Mini-center "Water".

Mini-center “Green Workshops” – equipment for recycling materials, tables for drawing with sand, ornamental plants were purchased and installed in the center, funded by the Project. Master classes, exhibitions and training sessions are held here. More than 800 people have been involved in environmental practices in two years.

A decorative waterfall, rattan furniture, and ornamental plants have been purchased for the Green Foyer mini-center. The center organizes exhibitions, master classes, eco-theater performances, training sessions, thematic changes. The coverage is over 1000 people annually.

A gazebo, ornamental plants, and wooden decor were purchased for the Green Class mini-center. This made it possible to conduct educational and recreational activities with children and adults in the fresh air.

A unique interactive stand “Is it easy to be a power plant?” Has been ordered for the mini-center “Energy” (exercise bike for generating energy and turning on electrical appliances) along with other equipment, as well as games for workshops, research projects, experiments. More than 1,500 residents of Grodno have already taken part in them.

The mini-center “Water” is equipped not only with materials for laboratory workshops, but also with an interactive stand “Precious Water”, which makes it possible to determine the loss of water during various human activities in everyday life. More than 1200 people have already taken part in trainings, laboratory workshops, seminars, research on the issues of careful use of water.

At present, all centers are actively interacting, functioning, purchasing and installing new equipment.

On the basis of mini-centers, large-scale and chamber events are organized with the active participation of representatives of local communities: preschoolers, adolescents, youth in Grodno and the region, teachers, residents of educational institution microdistricts, elderly people, etc.

Favorable conditions have been created for the birth and support of socially significant children’s and youth environmental initiatives.

The partners of the initiative have successfully implemented most of the planned activities. On the basis of secondary school No. 12 in Grodno, active participation in all environmental practices of the initiative was organized, 6 trainings and 10 ESD workshops were conducted using the capabilities of the created educational mini-centers.

The most striking, meaningful, large-scale of them are:

- inclusive bike ecoquest “Give the Planet an Hour!” (September 2019, 2020, March 2021, more than 800 participants; popularization of cycling as an environmentally friendly way of life, ecological cycling events);
- information and educational campaign “Energy efficient planet: define your position” (November 2019, 2020, more than 1800 participants; including a series of trainings, workshops, master classes on energy efficiency, an information campaign in the microdistrict, LED show);
- a long-term environmental and educational campaign “Clean Business” (December 2019 – November 2020, more than 2600 participants; including a series of information and game programs, ecological events, trainings,

- workshops, master classes on the recycling of raw materials and the separate collection of waste, the show "Second-Art", etc.);
- action "Earth Hour: arithmetic and geography of our participation" (March 2020, 2021, more than 600 participants, 44 Grodno streets, 16 settlements in the region and the city of Shakhtinsk, Kazakhstan);
 - open city forum of environmental initiatives (March – April 2020, more than 300 participants);
 - ecological shift during the school health camp (June-July 2020, more than 200 people involved; a series of educational workshops and environmental campaigns);
 - ecological marathon "2020 useful summer activities" (June – August 2020, more than 700 participants) and a summer methodological school (July 2020, 30 teachers from the educational institution of the republic).

In total, the partner institutions ensured the participation of more than 10,000 residents of Grodno and the region in the activities of the initiative. More than two dozen scenarios have been developed, a program for the ecological shift during the school health camp; more than 2,000 leaflets were created and distributed; the creative album "The ABC of Saving the Planet" was created; a collection of creative works of the forum participants was created.

The innovativeness of the approaches consisted in continuity, openness and succession in the field of additional environmental education in the context of the "kindergarten – school – university" triad, the wide use of the possibilities of remote interaction and information and computer technologies, the implementation of the objectives of the initiative through the organization of ESD (education for sustainable development) practices, as well as in close cooperation with local (city) government.

Preschoolers, schoolchildren, students, teachers, local residents acted as agents of positive change in the interest of the environmentally friendly lifestyle of local communities. The importance of the initiative has been repeatedly noted by representatives of the city government, the education system, and the media.

The useful experience of implementing a local environmental initiative was presented 13 times in mass media publications, more than 260 times in Internet publications in regional and national sources, at five national forums.

The obtained results allow us to predict high activity and demand for the multicenter "URA Grodno!" for several years ahead:

- close cooperation of the partners of the initiative has been established;
- a functional educational multicenter was created, on the basis of which the school alone conducted more than 15 laboratory workshops and 5 field laboratory workshops, 6 trainings; more than 600 people (including teachers, students and schoolchildren) were trained in monitoring techniques within the framework of the events;
- a program for holding workshops in the State Educational Institution "Secondary School No. 12 in Grodno" was developed, using the equipment of educational mini-centers as resource support;

- as a result of the measures taken, about 6,000 residents of Grodno are involved in an environmentally friendly lifestyle;
- More than 2,500 Grodno residents were able to familiarize themselves with the methods of environmental monitoring and resource conservation in everyday life, to determine their contribution to solving energy problems.

Thus, the local environmental initiative "URA Grodno!" is a worthy example of engaging the local community in meaningful environmental practices, ensuring openness, continuity and succession of additional environmental education for all generations. The organizers of the initiative are ready for cooperation and invite all people who are not indifferent to the fate of the planet to join its activities.

The materials of the initiative can be found in open access in the network community "URA Grodno!": <https://www.facebook.com/groups/760173954420940/>.