

HOW TO ACT TOGETHER? MODELS OF COOPERATION DEVELOPED BY FOR THE EARTH ASSOCIATION AND ALLIED ORGANIZATIONS

INFORMATION BROCHURE



Content editor
Magdalena Kawa

Copy editor
Joanna Stachyra-Galant

Translated from Polish by
Andrij Saweneć

Photos by
**Karolina Balmas-Pęczuła, Julita Delbar, Weronika Lis,
Bronisława Michałek-Janc, Kacper Pęczuła, Igor Tratkowski**

Printing design and layout by
Karol Grzywaczewski

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INTRODUCTION

This brochure presents two models of cooperation developed by the For the Earth Association (in Polish, Stowarzyszenie „Dla Ziemi”) in partnership with other entities.

The first model is women’s cross-cultural cooperation. In our case, these are women with refugee experience and residents of rural areas. The model was created based on many years’ cooperation between the For the Earth Association and women’s communities operating in the Lublin Voivodeship. Since 2009, the Association has been supporting the process of integration of refugees with the host society. Consequently, the developed model can be seen as the next step in this process.

The very idea of creating a model resulting in establishing the Embraced Women’s Collective, was, on the one hand, quite risky. But on the other hand, it is its main assumption that proves the strength of the whole undertaking, because, while initiating the concept, its authors assumed it should be developed in a fully process-oriented and democratic way. They gave themselves the full authority to make everything happen in a process attentive to the diverse needs of the Collective’s members. Thanks to the support of trainers with experience in conducting a group process, they achieved the intended effect, which was to develop an intercultural model of women’s cooperation.

The second model was created based on the cooperation established between the For the Earth Association and the Institute of Polish Philology of the KEN Pedagogical University in Kraków. It assumed providing individual educational support to school-age children living in the Center for Foreigners in Łuków, where the Association has been implementing its activities since 2009. Most of the activities carried out there by the organization included a component supporting the education of refugees. The established cooperation allows to continue the long-term educational process carried out as part of students internships in the field of teaching Polish as a foreign language for yet another year.

We hope that the solutions we have developed will be an inspiration to undertake similar activities. We also hope that our experience and tips will facilitate the transition through this process, and the developed models will contribute to the support of the communities you work for.

If this brochure does not answer all your questions, we encourage you to contact us. We will be happy to share our experience and support you in your actions. Contact details can be found on the Association's website at <http://dlaziemi.org/kontakt/>.

The brochure would not have been completed without the support of people involved in the development of both models. At this point, let me thank to Prof. Małgorzata Pamuła-Behrens of the KEN Pedagogical University in Kraków and Karolina Suska for taking their time and sharing their experiences.

Magdalena Kawa

ABOUT DEVELOPING THE MODELS

Every action we take has a story. The models we have been searching for are the most effective and innovative solutions, which are easily available and quite obvious, but at the same time strangely unpopular, not fully discovered and not commonly used.

We have been trying to establish collectives from the very beginning of our in-depth work with female refugees. At first, this work was based on arts and crafts activities. This is how the Second Things Collective was established, which was developing the arts and crafts workshop in the Center for Foreigners in Łuków. It encouraged local women and female refugees to meet together and mutually share their knowledge and skills. The collective is about being together, solving problems, but also pursuing passions and interests together. The next step in the development of joint activities was the Embraced Collective.

The pandemic has brought many disappointments and difficulties, but it has also taught us completely new skills and opened up new ways of communication. Challenges often have two sides: the difficult one and the one from which you can learn something. If it was not for the pandemic, we would not have formed so many alliances that became possible thanks to online platforms like Teams and Zoom. Initially, using these tools brought about problems such as the lack of sufficient computer skills, low quality internet connection, and the

experience of a completely new type of contact through the screen, which was quite different from live contact and contributed to ruining the impression of a face-to-face meeting, etc. However, they also gave us opportunities we did not have before, such as the possibility of using educational support provided by people living in a completely different city or even in another country. After the outbreak of the pandemic, tutoring for children from the Center for Foreigners in Łuków was provided by people who lived in Switzerland, Germany or France at that time, and the online form gave them opportunities for contact and education. The model of classes for children was born as a result of tutoring given to two boys from Chechnya in the first months of the pandemic by Prof. Małgorzata Pamuła-Behrens, a teacher of Polish as a foreign language, who was then in Switzerland.

Ewa Kozdraj
President of the For the Earth Association



MODEL OF COOPERATION - INTERCULTURAL ALLIANCES

The model described here was developed based on many years' experience of the For the Earth Association in cooperation with formal and informal institutions/initiatives operating in the Lublin region, in particular in small towns and villages.

In 2015, the For the Earth Association launched a series of meetings in women's circles, operating mainly in the countryside. Our first partner for the action was the Lublin-based Bona Fides Association for Supporting Activities, then we got in touch with the Communal Library and Community Center in Łaziska and the Łaziszczańki Women's Association. With subsequent meetings, we established a growing network of allied organizations/initiatives. What the visited places had in common were Active Women's Clubs or other women's initiatives operating there. The aim of the activities was to enable women living in rural areas and small towns to meet with women refugees. For most Polish women, it was the first opportunity to talk directly to a person fleeing her country and seeking shelter in Poland. Apart from learning about the story of a particular woman, the legal provisions regulating the situation of refugees were also discussed. The meetings were continued as part of subsequent projects implemented by the For the Earth Association.



MODEL OF COOPERATION – INTERCULTURAL ALLIANCES

In 2021, the initiative received the first prize in the Civil Society for Dialogue contest, whose aim was to promote civil society and support cultural diversity. The contest was organized by the United Nations Association Poland.

The desire to increase the participation of women with refugee experience in similar initiatives led to the idea of establishing a Women's Meeting Club in the Center for Foreigners. Polish female artists were invited there to conduct workshops on their profession, teaching women new competences. As a consequence, a crafts workshop was established in the center, as well as the Second Things social shop, where handicrafts made by refugee women are sold.

All of the experience gained was used in the assumptions of the Enabled project aimed at, among others, establishing an intercultural women's collective. It included women residing in the Łaziska commune and women with refugee experience living, among others, in Łuków, Lublin and Radzyń Podlaski. The process of creating the collective included such elements as:

- a diagnosis and integration meeting aimed to help women interesting in building the collective get to know each other, as well as to gather goals and expectations related to the initiative's functioning,
- WenDo trainings aimed at strengthening the collective members' sense of agency and cementing the group,
- project classes on creating a product that the members of the collective were to produce together – thanks to the use of the design thinking method, the participants of the classes were included in the whole process on equal terms,
- participation of the collective's representatives in a study visit to Norway, where they visited their partner organization, the Vintage Baby social cooperative. There, they learned about the methods and tools used by the cooperative, which supports the process of integration and professional activation of refugee women living in Sandefjord,
- a social campaign featuring the members of the collective in social media, such as Facebook, TikTok and YouTube. During the two months of the campaign, the music video was watched by over 146,000 people, while the number of view on Facebook exceeded 600,000 and the TikTok posts received more than 465,000 views. What is more, our campaign was featured as a Top Ad by TikTok, which means it was

rated by the system as one of the best ads in its category. The campaign materials were also published in the EEA and Norway Grants media library.

- a series of meetings in Active Women's Clubs and women's groups operating in the Lublin region, during which the idea of a collective and a model of cooperation aiming at encouraging similar initiatives in the visited places were presented.

The model we developed is the first initiative in the Lublin Voivodeship that went through the process of creating an intercultural group in such a comprehensive way.

These experiences are presented by Karolina Suska, the leader of the Active Women's Club in Łaziska, whom the For the Earth Association has been cooperating with since the beginning of meetings of refugee women with female residents of villages and small towns in the Lublin Voivodeship.

BEGINNINGS

The meetings that have been taking place since 2014 were of great importance to the collective, although of course, when starting organizing them, no one assumed that it would last so long and turn out to be such a wonderful experience. In the beginning, we planned only a few meetings, but they are still taking place. I think that these meetings were important primarily from the perspective of helping women living in rural areas get the feel of interculturality, because they do not have the opportunity to contact people representing a culture other than their own on a daily basis.

It is important that the meetings had a certain continuity and were not one-off events. It was a series of repeated meetings, which gave a real chance to get to know another person. We were guided by the assumption that we meet to get to know each other and learn something about ourselves, but without any top-down scenario.

We knew that we were meeting an interesting woman who came to Poland from another country and that was the beginning. Then, the very course of the meeting opened up various doors and topics. In retrospect, I believe that these meetings were of great importance to the group that now works as a collective. It is very united, full of warmth for each other and has a great desire to do something together.





IF YOU WANT TO REPLICATE OUR IDEA, IT IS WORTH CONSIDERING...

I would start with an open mind. It is worth giving yourself space for such meetings to take place in various institutions, so that they can be organized in small communities.

When it comes to specific steps, I would start with a conversation. This may seem very trivial, but I would start by establishing contact and explaining how enriching these meetings can be.

A crucial factor is to make an effort. Just to make an effort. It is important not to assume that it will not work in our community. I would advise such groups to just start working, without thinking about how many people will be there and whether this formula will catch on. From my perspective, each case is best verified by time but also by relationships. Those that are established will not allow the initiative to burn out quickly.

A possible scenario might look like this: having an open mind, deciding that we want to act, starting the implementation of the idea, and then going by relationship.

In addition, it is important – and this is what happened in our collective – that the group is strongly integrated from the very beginning. The first meetings were the most important.

Not all of the women who were involved in the process of creating the collective had the previous experience of working together. What we managed to do and what was the foundation of our activity was to build relationships and give space for women to spend some time together, get to know each other and like each other. When a good relationship is established, women themselves will wind up the mechanism of action.

HOW TO KEEP UP THE ENERGY OF THE GROUP AND TRANSLATE IT INTO SUSTAINABLE ACTIONS?

For sure, you have to stay in touch, meet each other and do different things together. These do not always have to be face-to-face meetings, sometimes it is enough to organize an online event. What is important is the sense of community, that is, doing something together. All this results in building deeper relationships, and on the basis of relationships, the energy of the group is generated. In our collective, it is creating something together that keeps the energy up.



LET’S OUTLINE AN ACTION PLAN THAT COULD BE USEFUL TO OTHER GROUPS INTERESTED IN SIMILAR ACTIVITIES

Of great help is the involvement of a non-governmental organization or an institution that has contact with people experiencing refugee crisis. Such an organization/institution can help to connect the two communities. When we receive feedback that our initiative is valued and admired, I always emphasize that it did not happen by itself. The whole idea was implemented due to the meeting of two entities. One of them had experience in working with refugees, and the other in activating women living in rural areas. Secondly, we need to build relationships, because getting to know each other outside the formal environment can bring great benefits.

In the longer term, it is important to give space to women themselves and allow them to decide what they would like to do together. In our case, this autonomy is really huge and we consider it a value. The lack of a scenario that imposes something in advance is of great importance.



Age diversity is also important. The different age of the participants helps to maintain the collective in a situation where some people are busy with their daily work, but those women who are retired and have more free time can give more energy.

We should also remember that to create an action plan we need time. It will not happen right away. And then there goes consistency in action, following the steps that have been already taken.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF THIS FORM OF COOPERATION AND HOW CAN THEY BE PREVENTED?

From my perspective, the biggest risk for our collective is distance. It is related to the place of residence of individual people. We are divided by quite a few kilometers and it is not always possible to cover them quickly. We have to plan well in advance, as we do not always manage it to act “here and now”. We could definitely do more if we lived closer.

If I were observing this process from an external perspective, I would think that another risk is a fear whether the women who make up the intercultural collective will find a common language with each other, whether they will manage to break stereotypes, whether they will have something to talk about with each other, and whether it will be interesting for them. But in the case of the Embraced collective, these doubts were immediately dispelled. The possibility of meeting and talking together allowed to eliminate such a threat quite quickly.

The diagnosis and integration training was the first project activity that started the process of creating the collective. After its completion, each of the participants was asked to answer the question, “What was the most valuable thing for you during the training, what do you take with you?”

- I take with me peace and curiosity, willingness to further change and work on myself;
- I take with me the awareness that I should appreciate myself more;

MODEL OF COOPERATION – INTERCULTURAL ALLIANCES

- I leave this meeting with good energy;
- It was valuable that we could listen to each other;
- Thanks to the training I was able to believe in myself;
- What was important to me was the time spent together;
- I take with me strength and faith in a better tomorrow;
- It was important to realize that you have to be able to listen to people and to be able to speak so that others listen to you; -
- I take with me the experience of meeting and listening to others;
- What was important to me? Meeting women and other cultures. The opportunity to talk about our feelings, the awareness that each of us is unique;
- The most valuable for me was the experience of confidence and responsibility in my social activities;
- I take with me the whole atmosphere of the training;
- I leave this place with the awareness that joint thinking helps to achieve the intended goal.





TO, CO NAJWAŻNIEJSZE

BOBŠUEX KXETAP,
CZYLI ZROZUMIENIE

TO, CO NAJWAŻNIEJSZE

WIARA, CZYLI
ԴՆԺՅԵՃ



TO, CO NAJWAŻNIEJSZE

WOLNOŚĆ,
CZYLI AZADÎ



TO, CO NAJWAŻNIEJSZE

BEZPIECZENSTWO,
CZYLI շԵՑԳՐՈՅԽՈՅԵՁ



TO, CO NAJWAŻNIEJSZE

НАДІЯ, CZYLI
NADZIEJA

For the needs of the social campaign “What’s most important”, we asked the members of the collective what participation in this project meant to them and why they had decided to go into this activity. Below are their answers:

- I am happy in the collective because I know that we have a lot in common, despite the fact that we are very different.
- I am in the collective because I know that together we can do more.
- I am in the collective because I know that it doesn’t matter where we are born, it’s important what kind of support we have among ourselves.
- I am in the collective because I know that women are strong and they can achieve a lot together.
- I am in the collective because I know that together we can do a lot of good for each other.
- I am in the collective because I know that we have a lot in common, although we are not the same. I like this otherness.
- I am in the collective because I know that diversity enriches.
- I am in the collective because I am happy to be where they want me. For me, having friends around is life.
- I am in the collective, because the collective changes the world.
- I am in the collective because I know we share the same values.

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TO, CO NAJWAŻNIEJSZE

MIŁOŚĆ,
CZYLI ԲՈՂԱ



TO, CO NAJWAŻNIEJSZE

ՆՈՐՈՇԵԼՈՂ,
CZYLI ŻYCIE



TO, CO NAJWAŻNIEJSZE

PRZYJAŹŃ, CZYLI
ДРУЖБА



TO, CO NAJWAŻNIEJSZE

ԾՈՅՅԱԼ, CZYLI
RODZINA



TO, CO NAJWAŻNIEJSZE

ԺՈՒԽԱԼ, CZYLI
PRZYJACIELE



TO, CO NAJWAŻNIEJSZE

NIEZALEŻNOŚĆ, CZYLI
НЕЗАЛЕЖНІСТЬ



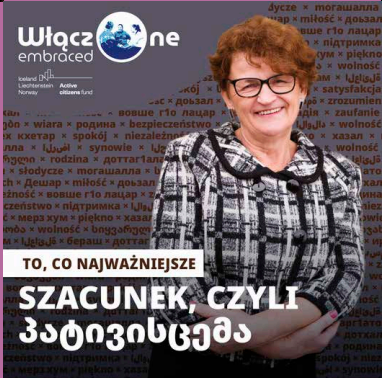
TO, CO NAJWAŻNIEJSZE

ՔՄՏԻՅՈՂԱ, CZYLI
UŚMIECH



TO, CO NAJWAŻNIEJSZE

ԴԵՏԱՊ, CZYLI
EDUKACJA



TO, CO NAJWAŻNIEJSZE

SZACUNEK, CZYLI
ՀԱՅԴՈՅԻՆԵՑԵՁ



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From October 2022, meetings were held in women's circles in the Lublin Voivodeship. Members of the collective visited Łaziska, Gałęzów Kolonia Pierwsza, Kolonia Niedźwiada, Radecznica, and Jabłonna Majątek. After each of these meetings, an evaluation survey was conducted. Below we present the statements of women who took part in the meetings sharing their impressions after getting acquainted with the idea of the collective and its achievements.

Here are the reflections of some women who participated in the meetings:

- Such meetings show that it is worth opening up to others;
- It was a very inspiring meeting that motivated us to act;
- Today's meeting showed me how much remains to be done. Now I have a different view of the current situation, and a thought came to me that together we can do much more! In addition, it is worth pausing for a while sometimes and trying to walk in the other person's shoes;
- It was a very good time. We became integrated, we got to know the ideas of other women. I leave this place with inspiration to act;
- I know now from the stories I've learned that after such difficult experiences as refugee women have experience, you can get up and move on;



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- This meeting made us close, all of us who were there. I realized how strong women are;
- I realized that you can look at refugees differently and at the same time see that women in the world are the same – we have the same problems, joys and dreams;
- This meeting was very uplifting for all of us, I take nice memories with me;
- The meeting gave me the opportunity to learn about the problems faced by refugee women, I also got to know their needs and feelings. I have never talked about the situation of refugees in this way, and it gave me a lot – I tried to understand them better and become aware of what they lost by leaving their country;
- Such a meeting shows how important things can happen when you work together;
- It was a beautiful and touching meeting;
- Such events motivate women to take their lives in their own hands and to take responsibility for their decisions, it strengthens integration and stimulates the willingness to get to know oneself and others;
- From this meeting, I take away joy and satisfaction that I could participate in it. I am glad that I got to know other women and their stories. A question arose in my mind – how will today's meeting affect my decisions and my choices?

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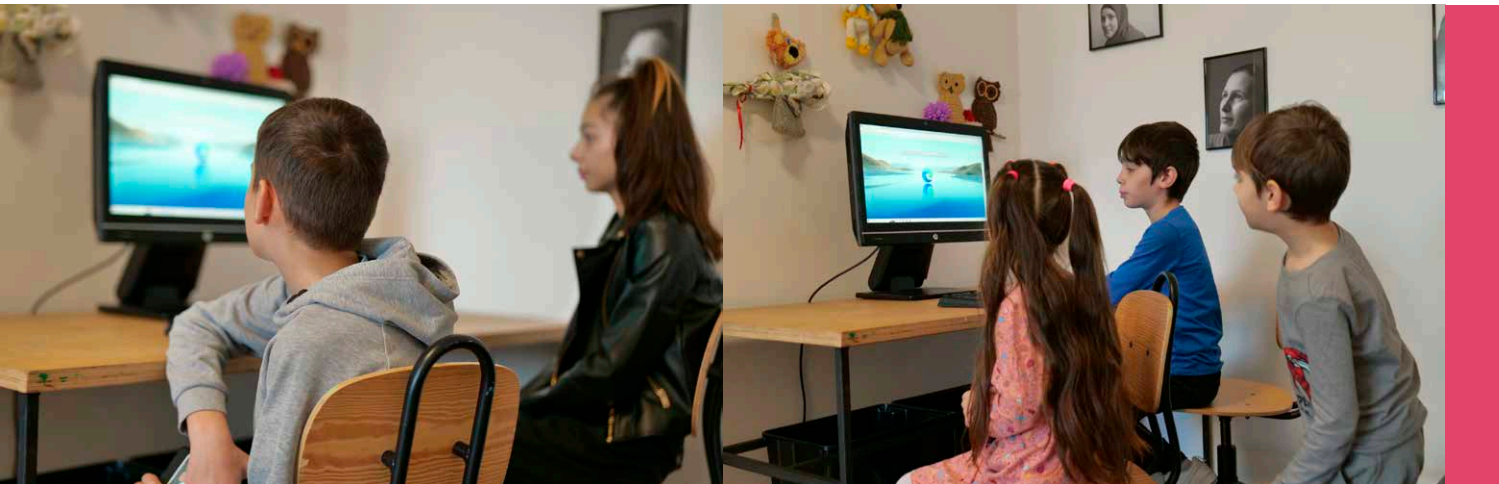


MODEL OF COOPERATION – EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT

Another model that we have managed to develop under the Embraced project is activities supporting the education of foreign children with refugee experience.

The For the Earth Association has established a formal partnership with the Institute of Polish Philology of the KEN Pedagogical University in Kraków. Thanks to this cooperation, each school-age child living in the Center for Foreigners in Łuków¹ received support in learning Polish. Classes are conducted by students of speech therapy and Polish philology preparing to teach Polish as a foreign language and are held as part of internships included in the study program. Thanks to this, students are under constant substantive supervision of lecturers responsible for preparing for internships and supervising their course. Before the start of the lessons, preparatory classes are held, thanks to which students become aware of the problems and challenges they may face. Internships are monitored, which makes it possible to report emerging challenges on an ongoing basis, and, if necessary, to receive help and organizational or substantive support.

¹ The classes can also be attended by school children who have already moved out of the Center after the end of the procedure, but live in Łuków.



Working with one child for a year allows you to get to know their situation, the level of learning Polish and other subjects, and to establish a relationship – building a sense of trust and security, which is necessary during the teaching process. In addition, students undergoing internships are given the opportunity to learn about the specifics of working with a foreign child experiencing refugee status. Such practice allows them to permanently use the knowledge acquired during classes included in the curriculum.

Due to the distance between the children living in the Center for Foreigners and the students giving them lessons, classes are conducted remotely. This form has its limitations. However, without this solution, it would not be possible to provide such a long-term and systematic form of individual language support offered to each school-aged child staying in the Centre.

The For the Earth Association is responsible for preparing the entire internship process in terms of organization, including providing a contact person who is available during the classes, enables contact with parents, and reminds children who need it about the classes. The Association in cooperation with the KEN Pedagogical University in Kraków also provided children with the equipment necessary to participate in classes and with a good quality internet connection.

The cooperation that started in the academic year 2020/21 was the first and so far the only such initiative in Poland, providing foreign children with refugee experience with individual support in learning Polish.

Prof. Małgorzata Pamuła-Behrens from the Institute of Polish Philology of the KEN Pedagogical University in Kraków, who was the initiator of this project and one of the tutors of internships, answered our questions about how this model works.

BEGINNINGS

The model was not inspired by any similar activities carried out by other universities or NGOs. Everything happened very spontaneously! My acquaintance with the For the Earth Association began before the Covid 19 pandemic. We knew that the organization cooperated with the Center for Foreigners in Łuków and we established contact with it. When schools were closed due to the pandemic, I decided that it would be good to support the children living there and for several months I worked individually with one of the families. When I saw that it brings results, I realized that having university facilities I can do more by involving my students in it.

So it all started with my individual experience and openness of Ewa Kozdraj, President of the For the Earth Association, who very willingly responded to my proposal. After this period of individual work, I involved students in the whole initiative in order to increase the effectiveness of help.

LEARNING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE INDIVIDUALLY CERTAINLY BRINGS MANY BENEFITS, BUT IT IS ALSO COMES WITH MANY CHALLENGES. HOW DID THE PROCESS OF PREPARING AND IMPLEMENTING POLISH LESSONS FOR CHILDREN LIVING IN THE CENTER FOR FOREIGNERS IN ŁUKÓW LOOK LIKE FROM YOUR PERSPECTIVE?

The fact that the For the Earth Association is constantly involved in the project is of great help. One of its employees oversees the entire process. It is a huge support. The Association really provides exceptional organizational management of the whole project. Lists of children, contacts with parents – everything is on time.



MODEL OF COOPERATION – EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT

When it comes to us, the university provided children with university accounts. This allows them to take full advantage of the learning platform we use at the university.

At the beginning, we had huge technical difficulties. The internet connection in the Center was quite poor, the children had no computers, and when computers came along, they still had no headphones. So we organized a St. Nicholas' Day campaign at the university, which allowed to provide each child with headphones. We sent them to the Centre and the Association made it sure that children actually received them.

Finally, we also managed to solve the problem with the internet through finding a company that addressed this problem. These difficulties can be described as technical ones.

On the other hand, there is the challenge of how to build a relationship between the child and the teacher. This takes time and we try very hard to ensure that children are taught by the same people throughout the year. Beginnings are always difficult, children are not always punctual, they do not always have what they should have with them in class. Learning conditions are not always sufficient. We certainly still have a lot to do in this area. At the same time, we remember that this is due to the specific situation in which these children find themselves. On the one hand, there are technical problems to be solved here, but also those related to motivation. Some children are eager to learn, they know that they need to know the Polish language. They feel the sense of learning Polish, because it is what they planned, but not all children are motivated enough to engage in additional activities. For some, remote learning is difficult, they lack direct contact and fail to quickly build a relationship with teachers, which is crucial in this process.

When you succeed, however, you may have unusual experience. For example, last year I was called by terrified female students who said, "Professor, do you know that this girl is having an exam in three weeks and her family is to leave the Center. Please, do something about it". Here, the relationship and responsibility of the students who prepared their pupil for the exam was very clearly visible. It was extremely important to them.

The importance of relations can also be illustrated by a certain event. The Centre for Foreigners in Łuków is inhabited mainly by Chechen children. After the killing of a school-teacher by a Chechen man in France, I was wondering how students would react to this event, because they mostly teach Chechen children. It turned out that it was not of any significance to students, because these were "their" children, whom they knew and with whom they built a relationship. This experience showed that individual situations did not affect relationships. It was very interesting.

One of the difficulties was the fact that we still fail to include this cooperation in the long-term strategic activities of the Institute of Polish Philology of the KEN Pedagogical University in Kraków. I see it as a certain organizational difficulty. Our language teaching specialization was supported by the previous authorities of the Institute, which gave us a lot of space in action, recognizing that if we believe that something is good and necessary, it means that it is, and thanks to this trust cooperation was better. At the same time, it should be emphasized that the external conditions were different – we had much less contacts with children who experienced migration, and refugee children in particular. Therefore, it was a unique chance for students majoring in language teaching to contact such children. We argued then that allowing such cooperation and conducting remote classes for children from Łuków is the only opportunity for our students to contact children experiencing migration, especially refugee flight. Now the conditions have changed and Ukrainian children are present in virtually every school in Kraków.

WHAT SHOULD BE THE RESULT OF THE INTERNSHIP PROGRAM?

At first, I imagined that it would be language support for children, who would be the main beneficiaries of the initiative. Over time, it turned out that students also benefit a lot from it. In their case, a huge change in attitudes can be primarily observed. These people are deeply involved in the process, they understand the problems that arise.

Before starting the internship, I usually hold an opening meeting, during which I talk about the specific nature of working with children with refugee experience. I emphasize that students should stop thinking that these children are given a gift and that what students do for them is priceless. I tell them that children have their problems and their language classes are just one element of their school life, and these classes cannot be understood in missionary terms. I try to give them a realistic view on things, at the same time making them aware that they do “a good job” and have a lot to offer these children, but if a child is absent from a lesson, it does not mean that he or she is “ungrateful” and does not appreciate what he or she gets. Of course, these lessons are important and needed, but students also take something for themselves. They can teach these children, which enriches their vocational training process.

I also try to explain the conditions in which refugee students live. Here, I also rely on my experience – first I taught two children, then three, and there were eight if them in the family. At first, just getting an appointment was a challenge. That is why I tell my students to look at children and parents as ordinary people.

I also strongly motivate students to focus on building relationships in their work. This is something I care a lot about. Building relationships takes place on many levels. To give an example, I will tell you about a particular case, at the same time specifying that we are talking about teaching Polish, but in fact we are preparing these children for the language of school education. Last year, I happened to join an online lesson for a while as I had to observe it. After the lesson, I talked with the students for quite a long time. We were wondering how to best help the schoolgirl who was preparing for the eighth-grader exam. We decided that instead of Polish lessons, the students would teach her mathematics and would prepare her for this exam, helping her to understand all mathematical issues. It was a very valuable experience because this girl was learning Polish through maths.

YOU HAVE ALREADY MENTIONED ABOUT THE PREPARATION PROCESS. WHAT ELSE DOES IT INCLUDE?

The preparatory program is well developed in speech therapy studies. It includes activities on activation, multiculturalism and multilingualism. There are elements of teaching techniques addressed to children and adults. We put emphasis on the Language of School Education method to teach our students how to adapt a text, how to make analysis of a child’s linguistic competence, how to adjust a text to the set demands, and how to introduce grammar material and new vocabulary. Generally speaking, we prepare them for teaching the language of schooling. We use the method of teaching Polish as a language of school education we ourselves [Prof. Małgorzata Pamuła-Behrens and Prof. Marta Szymańska of the KEN Pedagogical University in Kraków – Ed.] developed. In addition, we have an introductory meeting, where we show the context of teaching children with refugee experience.

We also use other materials, e.g. those developed by the Foundation for Social Diversity, project films. Besides, we have a lot of our own recordings, and we discuss particular cases. I also use what I call “shock therapy”, e.g. I present a documentary about migrants with irregular status in Poland, who are staying here illegally and made their way to the country by various means. Hence, the film also features graphic scenes with violence and rape. It is intended to make people aware that not every person who flees their country and ends up in Poland has the opportunity to get here safely and that it involves a lot of violence and difficult situations. It is always a shocking experience for students. In addition, during the internship, I provide them with additional materials, articles, and interviews.

When preparing students for the internship, we also make them aware that internships are obligatory and I think that due to this, students treat them as part of their professional experience.

IF OTHER ORGANIZATIONS WOULD LIKE TO ESTABLISH COOPERATION WITH THE UNIVERSITY IN ORDER TO OFFER SIMILAR LINGUISTIC SUPPORT TO CHILDREN/ADULTS WITH A MIGRATION/REFUGEE EXPERIENCE, WHAT, FROM YOUR PERSPECTIVE, SHOULD BE PAID SPECIAL ATTENTION TO?

Since universities have a certain structure, and internships are part of this structure, in case of such classes I would not go for volunteering for such classes, but for compulsory classes and internships. This is what we have in our university – people who want to study with us have a compulsory set of classes and internships. Due to this, they actually get this specific vocational experience.

The perspective of teacher students giving classes is also important. One of the practice groups has prepared guidelines for people who will teach in the next academic year. I will quote them now, as I think it is worth taking them into account when preparing for such classes:

- Plan your lesson carefully;
- Prepare an initial conversation with the child, ask how he or she feels, what’s going on;
- Repeat what the child has learned in previous lessons;
- It is not the amount of newly given material that counts, but the learning process and what the child has learned;



- Do not forget to summarize the lesson;
- Once in a while, prepare language games;
- You can involve parents in the learning process and ask about children’s needs; their moms or dads can assist in the process of learning.

Teacher students were also asked about their reflections on the process of learning Polish as a foreign language by children who live in the Centre for Foreigners in Łuków. Below are some of them:

- It was a very developing experience that gave a lot of satisfaction. In addition, we could open up to another person and their culture.
- It is a precious experience, not only in educational but also in cultural terms.
- It is a very interesting experience. The satisfaction is huge when you notice that a child makes a significant progress. Such lessons bring joy to both the teacher and the student.

- Conducting such classes requires a lot of patience and creativity, but it gives great satisfaction when you observe the student’s development.
- It was important to be able to introduce and improve specific language skills.
- Seeing a child who is happy being able to perform tasks without help and understands the rules gave me immense satisfaction.
- It was valuable to me that the boy was deeply engaged in each lesson and enjoyed the newly acquired knowledge.
- These lessons gave me the opportunity to self-develop and help the student.
- Conducting such classes gives a lot of satisfaction. We as students can learn something and gain experience. Thanks to such lessons, we are able to help children improve their communication skills and overcome school difficulties.
- Such cooperation allows you to gain experience in working with bilingual children, get to know their needs and explain what is not clear. Working with a child brings a sense of accomplishment if we see that the children are improving their language skills.

It is worth noting that the vast majority of students participating in the internship program in the school year 2021/22 claimed that the children they taught improved their level of Polish thanks to their lessons.

In the evaluation survey conducted after the end of the series of lessons, almost 74% of the respondents answered positively to the question, “Do you think that thanks to your classes, the level of knowledge of the Polish language of the taught person is improving?” The answer “no” was given by just over 5%, the remaining 21% of the respondents chose the answer “I don’t know”.

Children participating in Polish language lessons also shared their impressions about the classes. Their evaluation took the form of letters written to their teachers. Here are their excerpts:

Dear Mesdames Teachers! At the beginning of my letter, I would like to thank you very much for the time devoted to me and the things I learned in these classes. I really liked during the classes that, apart from Polish, you asked me what else I had a problem with. It was history, a very

difficult subject for me, in which I had mostly B’s in school. But thanks to the fact that you combined learning Polish with history, I had an A in history at the end of the school year, and an A in Polish as well. Thank you also for dealing in class with my passion and dream, which is a dog.

Thank you very much for these classes and the things you taught me in them. I really liked the cartoons that you showed me and the questions about the cartoon that I answered. Thank you for teaching me clock I had trouble with in school.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

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The challenge we take up in the Embraced project is the threat of social exclusion of groups with whom we have been working for years, such as female refugees, migrants, and women from rural areas, as well as the threat of educational exclusion of refugee children.

We want to live in an inclusive and open society. We are the only organizations in Łuków and the Opole district operating in this area.

In order to respond to the problem, we have developed two models of cooperation to strengthen social integration (refugees, migrants, universities, institutions, social organizations) and diversity, as well as counteracting exclusion. We strengthen the voice of people from the above-mentioned groups through activities related to culture, art, professional courses and trainings, engaging allied organizations and institutions such as the KEN Pedagogical University in Kraków. Thanks to these alliances and developed models ready to be replicated throughout Poland, we will ensure the sustainability of the project after its completion.

By involving a large group in direct activities, we lower social fears, break stereotypes and fight prejudices. We have trained female change leaders who are part of an intercultural collective. Its members have the power to influence many local communities.

We reduce the digital exclusion of refugee children and show how to unite communities for the common good, which is education.

Our partnerships with the Vintage Baby social enterprise from Norway, Communal Library and Community Centre in Łaziska, as well as alliances with other entities allowed us to improve the methods of working with disadvantaged groups, while the social campaign and communication activities enabled us to share our best practices with many other institutions and organizations.

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Włącz embraced one



Iceland 
Liechtenstein
Norway **Active
citizens fund**

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Stowarzyszenie
Dla Ziemi



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