

Preparation Meeting of the Ethics Promoting Campaign

Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC) South Asia,

29, 30 & 31 October 2007

Shanthi Ashram, Coimbatore, India

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1. Ethics Promotion Campaign

With the expectation to create a movement of children to make a platform to talk about the importance of Ethics education and the dialogue to be taken to the top levels of their countries, GNRC South Asia is meeting this October at Shanthi Ashram. The campaign will be based on the previous Regional and Global experiences related to promoting ethics education. The specialty in this campaign is that it will be designed for children across the region in all the countries with their involvement.

This will be done through different thoughts, aspects, creativity by different groups of children and leading to different campaigns in their own countries and ultimately get merged in to a single campaign in South Asia region.

2. Objectives of the meeting;

1. Share what we have been doing in the South Asia Region.
2. Identify what we need to do in the South Asia Region.
3. Design an Ethics Promoting Campaign for children in all the countries in the South Asia Region.
4. Share previous experience and success stories.
5. Identify the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) of GNRC South Asia and take preventive measures.

3. Partners of GNRC South Asia

The GNRC South Asia network works with seven partner organizations and several other allied members in six countries. The entire network builds on the expertise & experience of these partners at the regional level. Many of these organizations already work with children and most of them work for interfaith promotion. Given as Annexure 1 is a short description of organizations who attended the preparatory meeting.

- i. Hindu Vidyapeeth, Kathmandu, Nepal
- ii. Sarvadhana Sangam, Tamil Nadu, India
- iii. Sarvodaya Shramadana Sangamaya (Inc.), Sri Lanka
- iv. Shanti Ashram, Coimbatore, India

4. What we can do for children in the South Asia Region

Some of the areas looked at during the meeting;

1. The Violence children face

The adverse effects which children face with regard to the Child Rights violations and Human Rights violations, etc

2. Statistics about the status of children

The differences they work with, in the schools, their community, religion, faith and etc.

3. Conflict with in the region

It's important to take note of the conflicts we see in the Region with respect to the children and access to they're requirements

4. Political instability

Children cannot be talking about and they cannot change the system they live in

Some notes from the diary... giving you a glimpse of the range & depth of the discussion:

- Misinterpretation of communities and religions is a huge problem in today's world and this starts right from the child, when they are in the school settings, especially in the religious schools as we tell about what others need to do, but not what we should do.
- "Two different communities in my area work with harmony & co-existence as far as business matters are concerned, but if they start talking about religious activities, differences start to draw a line dividing each other. Even though people continue to tolerate others, some day the tolerance ends and leads to a problem" said Satish from Shanti Ashram.
- Even though we want to move from tolerance to acceptance, people need to understand that first they need to accept differences and respect what others have to say and do. Advocacy and lobbying should be done at the policy level in the states.
- Cast and religious differences are sometimes diluted by the profession in which you are; IT professionals today work at the same level even though they come from different religions & countries. Once a child was calling his father by his first name, and a person observing this asked the child why he said so? The child replied saying that this was how IT Professionals talk, so I am doing the same. Western culture is being adopted in the Indian Context.
- "At Shanti Ashram who ever joins no matter what religion, caste or community they come from are given the capacity to understand what others follow. Teachers are being trained at a very different level to understand others, and apart from this we have a parent's circle and share what we teach their child, thereby making them support their own child's learning. Once we had a programme for three-year-old children, it was to teach them how to fold their handkerchiefs and later we had a competition on the same skill. The results we got in this exercise was not just the skill, but a practice, which the kids started as they folded the clothes the parents had washed, without even them telling"
- "During the children's camps in Sri Lanka we told them to take the old exercise books they used and get the empty pages out of it and put together and make a note book and then use it to write what they had done during the day or week. After some time the children were requested to start looking at the first few pages and understand what they had done and realize what they could do better next time. This will make them more aware of what they are really capable of." said Aruna.
- Getting the help of Religious Leaders and making them involved with the children's activities can make children understand that each of them preaches the same thing and the children ultimately get knowledge, understand the co-existence and witness what the truth and reality is.
- People from different religions can interact with Religious leaders. Other invited guest come together every Sunday and the event is named as the Question and Answer Realization (QARZ)
- "There is a need to have some sort of programmes for the parents as they also require to be sensitized and motivated to work on these issues. Encourage children to learn. Both Parents and teachers need to be partners in this initiative. The environment also impacts the child very much; if the environment is very friendly the child will be happy and be a positive person without being violent. Once a child was sad and seated at the back of the class and when I asked, he said that the parents had a fight on the previous night and the mother had gone away without telling any one and

had not returned home. Because of this the child did not have breakfast nor did he complete the homework.”

- When we work with parents we need to get both the father and mother involved, if not there can be a line separating them and this can spark into a family differences. We celebrate each festival, but do we ever share the meaning of why we celebrate these festivals? By doing so we can make others understand our celebrations & faith practices.
- HIV/ AIDS, Stigma and discrimination, Hunger, Rights, Personal hygiene, Lack of awareness, Knowledge of parents, Nutrition, Drugs and smoking, Literacy, Child labour, Violence against children are some issues, which the children are facing and most of them are related to ethics education.
- Access to internet and pornographic materials on the web is a challenge. In this environment we need to understand the experiences of the child, & child safety will be given priority.
- The children now have access to technology and information. If they are not directed in the proper path they can be harmfully impacted. And if we don't do it today it will be too late. Life skills education and adolescent's education can play a huge role in this process.

5. Ethics Promotion Campaign

Mr. Aruna Jayasena led this session. He started with the question ***Why an Ethics Promotion Campaign?*** From the second forum to the third forum we have done a limited amount of activities during the period of 2004 – 2008. The South Asia Workshop for Ethics Education (SAWEE) was the most significant children's activity. We need to do more!

This campaign centered on children should lead to the 3rd Forum in May 2008. With the support of our partners this is possible. We are left with five months to organize children's activities. In this process children have an important role. We must let them develop a campaign by the children for the children. It will be wonderful if children can take this campaign to the political leadership of each country at the same time.

- *Frameworks, Timeline, Participation of Children, Theories of child development, Geographical area are some of the important factors Identified, discussed & incorporated into plan for the campaign.*
- *Following this Dr.Kezevino Aram building on the toolkit made a presentation of possible templates that can form the philosophical & theoretical part of the campaign.*

It was decided that the campaign will be based on the below mentioned variables;

1. Tool kit Modules

Understanding Others
Transforming the World

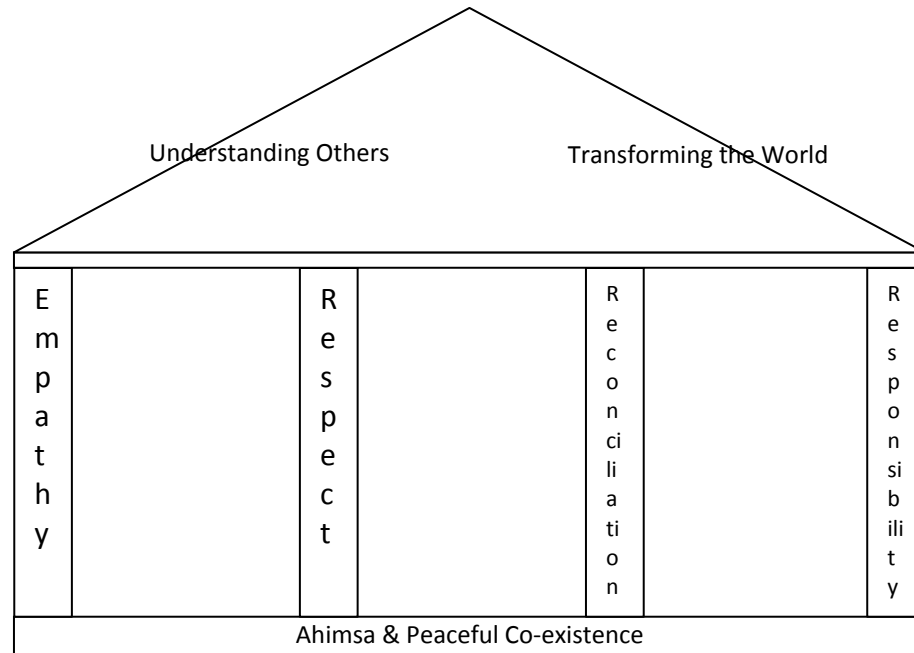
2. Values under each Module as building blocks

Empathy & Respect
Reconciliation & Responsibility

3. Combination of the South Asian aspect

Ahimsa
Peaceful co-existence

The above factors can also be figuratively placed as follows;



Some of the activities, which can be done for ethics promotion, were also discussed;

1. Appealing
2. Spiritual gathering
3. Journey for peace
4. Visual Arts
5. Discussions
6. Performing Arts
7. Talking
8. Interaction (Children and Children)
9. Interfaith prayers
10. Awareness
11. Games
12. Sharing of food, thoughts, resources, experiences, etc.
13. Rally
14. Exchanges
15. Field Visits
16. Creative Writing
17. Finding stories
18. Photo stories
19. Media products
20. Walks

6. Country Work Plans

There was consensus that it's crucial that each country identify their plans well ahead & in coordination. The three countries will be working on a common Regional Theme, "Walking together".

The meeting also gave each country time to meet & present a draft plan of activities before they leave. A draft plan was proposed by each country. It was also decided that the each country will have its own coordinating team, which will in turn prepare the country strategy for the campaign.

7. Key Points from the discussion

During this discussion many issues were taken in to consideration;

1. Funding allocation

The funding available was allocated to the three countries who will be implementing the campaign. Sri Lanka will also include Maldives as a part of their campaign. The funding was allocated among Nepal, India & Sri Lanka by 1:6:3

2. Campaign Coordination Committee

Each country will appoint a coordination committee to maximize transparency and to increase efficiency during the campaign to make use of the opportunities.

3. Proposal Format

The group agreed upon a general proposal format, common logo, common brochure, etc. to create an identity for the campaign.

4. Publicity & Communication Outreach

New media tools like websites, blogs, online forums and other mediums are to be used whilst using traditional print media, FM media and TV media in terms of publicizing. Mr.Satish Kanna made a special presentation on this.

5. Using the SWOT analysis

A special session was held to introduce the SWOT analysis by Dr.Kezevino Aram. The Secretariat highlighted the importance of using it for all the GNRC South Asia activities. This will be a very important tool for each country and the partner organizations in their daily activities.

8. Conclusion

It was the consensus of all gathered that the preparation meeting for the Ethics Promotion Campaign had been a very successful one. It provided an opportunity to discuss a variety of issues and incorporate new suggestions to enrich the activities of GNRC South Asia. Thanks in particular were given to Aruna Jayasena & Parthipan Palanisamy who put the whole meeting together. The Secretariat would like to thanks Shanti Ashram specially for hosting the meeting in Coimbatore and all the representatives for attending the meeting.

For any clarification please feel free to contact the secretariat by emailing us on sa@gnrc.net

9. Annexure

a. Partners of GNRC South Asia

i. **Hindu Vidyapeeth, Kathmandu, Nepal**

Established in 1985 and accommodates around 1300 students every year. They provide education up to the 10th standard and mean while they also promote moral and spiritual education which makes it a value based education. They are partners of Shanthi Shiva Ashram and also run a youth society for peace, giving more opportunities to students of their school.

Hindu Vidyapeet was introduced to the GNRC recently by the Shanti Ashram and took part at the GNRC South Asia workshop on Ethics education, the previous contact organization in Nepal was not very much active in the network. The Principal of Hindu Vidyapeet - Mr. Dadhiram Khanal acts as the contact person now in the network.

ii. **Sarvadhana Sangam, Tamil Nadu, India**

Established in 1985 in Northern Tamil Nadu is a Community Development Organization works in hundred villages. Sarvadhana has been a member of the GNRC network since its inception they work closely with Shanthi Ashram in India and Sarvodaya in Sri Lanka. Mr. Sundereshan is the contact person from Sarvadhana and also the coordinator for India for GNRC South Asia

Four of the main activities done by Sarvadhana can be as follows;

1. Facilitators and Educators Training Programme
2. Monthly full moon day interfaith Programme
3. Community Ethics Educator Training Programme
4. National Level Workshop to bring organizations working on Children together

iii. **Sarvodaya Shramadana Sangamaya (Inc.), Sri Lanka**

Sarvodaya, Sri Lanka's biggest charity is dedicated to making a positive difference to the lives of rural and urban Sri Lankans. this grassroots movement now reaches 15,000 villages in 34 districts with 1,500 staff throughout Sri Lanka. Founded by a Sri Lankan schoolteacher, Dr. A T Ariyaratne in 1958, sarvodaya's philosophy is based on Buddhist-Gandhian philosophy and work across all ethnic and religious communities. Sarvodaya is dedicated to the sustainable empowerment of people through self-help and collective support, to non-violence and peace.

Dr. Vinya Ariyaratne (Executive Director of Sarvodaya) acts as the GNRC South Asia Regional Coordinator and the secretariat is based in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

GNRC Sri Lanka has contributed to the network by the following activities;

1. Children's Camps
Sarvodaya was able to successfully execute four camps in Wellawaya (6 to 8 April 2007), Hambanthota (16 to 18 June 2006), Kegalle (19 to 21 May 2006) and Vauniya (29 April to 1 May 2006). The main areas of activities were based on Sports and Recreation, Aesthetic Activities and the role of children in today's world with conflict and challenges.
2. Story Books on Ethics Education
Four different stories were printed in two local languages (Sinhala and Tamil)
3. Assisting other projects done by Sarvodaya
GNRC Sri Lanka assisted some of the projects done by the Sarvodaya Early Childhood Development Unit (ECDU), UNICEF and British Council.

iv. Shanthi Ashram, Coimbatore, India

Shanti Ashram was founded in 1986 by Dr. M. Aram and Mrs. Minoti Aram. Since its inception, it has sponsored a wide range of innovative programs inspired by the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi and serving 26 villages of the Perur Block in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu. The principal feature of the Ashram's activities has been the direct and proactive involvement of the village communities themselves in its programs. The Ashram's initiatives are all people based and people centered.

Shanthi Ashram has been able to execute some programmes/ activities under the GNRC banner as follows;

1. Summer Camp

It was a 30 day programme and Shanthi Ashram was able to have a one hour workshop every day on ethics education during the camp. It was a 30 day programme and Shanti Ashram was able to have a one hour workshop every day on ethics education during the camp.

2. HIV Positive mother's programme

The tool kit was used to share ideas and thoughts along with their experience through the life tree activity during this programme.

3. A Q and A session at the Ramakrishna Engineering College

4. South Asia Workshop on Ethics Education

Held from the 1 to 5 August 2006 at the Ashram with the participation of sixty children from seven countries and seven states of India, the South Asia Secretariat funded the Coimbatore Peace Festival held on the 5 August.

5. Gandhi Grama Rural Programme

6. Informal Education Centre

The tool kit was used for the training of eighteen teachers for this centre.

7. Interfaith Journey for Children

b. Country Plans

i. India; “ethics – care and share”

All three organizations namely the Shanti Ashram, Sarvadhana Sangam and the Bhai International Centre will be working together as India.

Week	Regional Level	National Level	State Level	District Level
November				
4			Children’s Exchange Visit (Coimbatore to Thiruwannamalai)	
December				
1	World AIDS day		Children’s Exchange Visit (Thiruwannamalai to Coimbatore)	
2	Press – Handout release – Advocacy			
3				
4			Interaction & Exchange to Mumbai	Spiritual gathering – Christmas
January				
1		Share Greetings – New year		
2			Talk Ethics	Spiritual gathering - Pongal Celebrations
3				
4	Walk together			
February				
1		Creative Arts		
2				Interaction between Urban and Rural Children
3				
4				
March				
1				Publishing a book
2				
3		Production of a Video Documentary and presentation to the Vice Premier		
4				

ii. Nepal; “a journey for ethics”

As a relatively new partner Hindu Vidyapeeth will seek support from the Regions and try to work in collaboration in its activities. Mr. Dadhiram Khanal only identified the themes he can work on, rather than the activities.

Week	Activity
November	
4	Sharing knowledge about Ethics Education
December	
1	Creative writing
2	
3	Spiritual gathering
4	
January	
1	Performing Arts
2	
3	Group discussion
4	
February	
1	Sharing & Caring
2	
3	Finding stories
4	
March	
1	Empowering Ethics
2	
3	
4	

iii. Sri Lanka; “talk ethics”

Sarvodaya will be working in its existing Children’s groups since they see it as a very strong way of communication and teamwork. The campaign will kick start with the children’s camps and then will have four exchanges, after the exchange a National group of 60 children will come together and have another camp, at the same time the campaign will start its work leading to a meeting with the President in March.

