

REPORT
TRAINING WORKSHOP
Amman, Jordan
6 – 10 February 2007



Capacity Building

Empowering Educators and Teachers to Promote Ethics Education through Inter-faith Learning

General description of the Workshop



The training workshop carried out in Amman 6 – 10 February 2007 was intended to give introduction and training in how to use the Toolkit that the Interfaith Council on Ethics Education for Children is developing. The training workshop was organized as capacity building for teachers and educators who work with children and who are interested in promoting ethics education through interfaith learning in the school environment.

The workshop aimed at developing competencies in a comprehensive and practical manner, equipping educators and teachers to use the Toolkit on Ethics Education and Interfaith Learning.

The participants came from different countries in the GNRC Arab region as well as from the GNRC Central Asia and Caucasus region. The teachers and educators were all involved and interested in the GNRC network and its interaction with schools and other educational systems.

The workshop provided knowledge about the content of the Toolkit through practical exercises combined with discussions on interfaith learning, ethics education, children’s rights and spirituality and the participants had opportunities to share their experiences and knowledge.

The objectives of the workshop were:

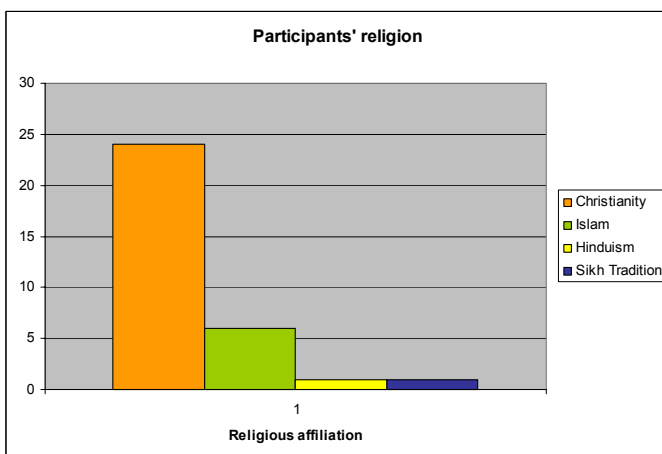
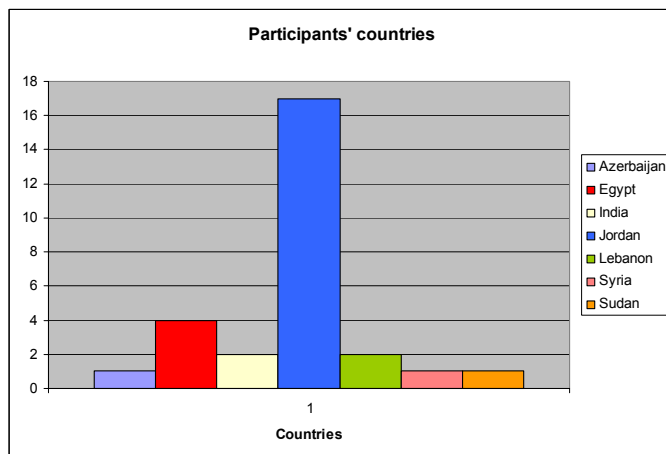
1. Develop a holistic approach to ethics education and inter-faith learning.
2. Share knowledge, develop skills and provide tools for the participants on how to use the Toolkit in the context of the Arab countries.
3. Explore the possibilities of using the Toolkit as school/child groups curricula

The logistics for the workshop were taken care of by the GNRC Arab region and the Ecumenical Studies Center in Amman.

Background of the participants

17 participants came from Jordan, 2 from Lebanon, 1 from Sudan, 4 from Egypt, 1 from Syria, 2 from India and 1 from Azerbaijan.

The four facilitators of the workshop came from Jordan, Lebanon, Switzerland and Tanzania.



20 of the 27 participants were Christian, five were Muslims, one came from the Hindu tradition and one from the Sikh tradition. Three of the four facilitators were Christians and one came from the Muslim tradition. The GNRC Coordinator is Christian.

In total, of the 32 persons at the workshop, 24 were Christians, 6 Muslims, one Hindu and one from the Sikh tradition.

Overview of the training workshop

The GNRC Coordinator for the Arab countries, Rev. Dr. Qais Sadiq welcomed the participants to the workshop, organized under the patronage of Her Royal Highness Princess Sumaya bint El Hassan.



Speaking during the official opening of the workshop, HRH Princess Sumaya bint El Hassan said that all religions in their different contexts espoused and promoted the dignity of all human beings. Her Royal

Highness decried the wanton violence, hatred and bloodshed carried out in the name of religions, stating that it was mainly the children who paid the price for these mindless actions.

HRH Princess Sumaya further said that no effort should be spared to face racism and discrimination in all forms by focusing on ethics education. She underscored the need to focus on teachers and educators who in turn will pass on these values and teachings to children and students.

The Secretary General of the Interfaith Council on Ethics Education for Children Ms. Agneta Ucko stated that the aim of the toolkit was to promote and nurture ethics and values in an interfaith context. Ms. Agneta Ucko welcomed the participants on behalf of the Rev. Miyamoto, Representative of the Arigatou Foundation, and shared with them the objectives of the workshop followed by an introductory presentation of the Arigatou Foundation, the GNRC and the Interfaith Council on Ethics Education for Children.

During the following sessions of the first day participants explored together what binds us together as a Common Humanity and the fundamental Approach to Children. Participants were introduced to the Toolkit and to the topics of ethics education and interfaith learning, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and spirituality.

...“We can no longer live as if each religion was an island. In today’s world, people of religion are bound to live together with people of another religion and people of no religion are bound to intersect with people of religion...”

Ms. Ucko affirmed that interfaith learning should promote openness, honesty and compassionate attitudes towards other human beings. She underlined that children not only need to know and appreciate their own faith but also need to have an informed understanding of what others believe

Ms. Ucko explained how ethics education can enhance children’s innate ability to make positive contributions to the well being of their peers, family and communities. She also highlighted that ethics education helps affirming dialogue and communication with oneself and with others in an ongoing process of individual and collective learning. She recalled the importance of nurturing in children values that are conducive to live in diversity and to respond to the needs of their societies.

WORKSHOP SCHEDULE

Time	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
8.00 – 9.00		Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast
9.00 - 10.30		A Common Humanity	How to prepare a workshop	Understanding Others (Experience-based training)	Learning in an inter-faith platform
		The Approach to Children - CRC			
10.30 - 11.00		Break	Break	Break	Break
11.00 - 13.00		Official Opening by HRH Princess Summaya bint El Hassan	How to deliver a session	Understanding Others (Experience-based training)	Follow up Plans and ideas
13.00 - 14.00		Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
14.00 - 15.30		Ethics Education and Interfaith Learning	Plan a session Context Realities	Feed back from students and facilitators	Closing
15.30 - 16.00		Break	Break	Break	
16.00 - 18.00	Opening Introduction	Spirituality	Plan a session Methodology and Activities	Evaluation	
	Getting to know each other	The Toolkit - content and methodology			

	Opening/Closing
	Knowledge based-activities
	Meals
	Skills development Sessions
	Tools

Ms. Riham Kawar, Director of In-Service at the Amman Baccalaureate School, facilitated the sessions in the morning of the second day by introducing and working together with the participants on effective facilitation techniques. The participants practiced different ways of asking empowering questions and explored how to create a culture of thinking while working with children.



Ms. Kawar underlined the need for internalization of concepts and for thorough preparation. Working with children requires a certain level of communication skills which the participants were introduced to and given a possibility to experience.



The afternoon session was intended as a preparation for the experience-based training that was scheduled for the third day. Sister Emilie Tannous, High School Director from Lebanon facilitated the session on context realities. Participants identified issues that are important and affect children in society today. The session served to underline the importance of being aware of and taking into account the context when working with children and young people.

Following this session, the participants began the concrete planning of the session they were to facilitate the day after. Participants were divided into three groups with the task to plan a one day session with children from schools in Amman, who were invited to participate in workshop for one day. Participants prepared themselves to be facilitators the next day. They went through the First Module of the toolkit, *Understanding Others*, and designed their own sessions based on the module, the learning process, methodologies and activities suggested in the toolkit.



Twenty students from four different private schools in Amman attended a one-day session on the third day of the training workshop. They were divided into three groups where they discussed, discovered and reflected about the importance of mutual understanding, of respecting differences, getting along with people who are and think differently than them, and of being empathetic with other people.

The teachers and educators let the students get immersed in a journey to learn more about themselves, their own identity and their relationships with other people. The journey took them to discuss about their own and other countries, cultures and religions and also to share their points of view about topics of interest and concern.



A feedback session of the experience-based training with the students was carried out during at the end of the day. Students gave feedback on their experience and expressed appreciation for the opportunity to engage with each other and the teachers and educators on how to enhance respect and empathy among people of different cultures and religions in their own context.

The teachers and educators drew conclusions about their learning working in a different setting using the methodologies suggested in the toolkit. They also revised how they functioned together as a team, how they facilitated the sessions and how they used the toolkit.



At the last day, Ms. Ucko lifted up some of the key elements in the toolkit as a reminder and feedback to the experience based training. Dr. Mustata Ali, GNRC Coordinator for Africa and part of the facilitators' team, shared experience from the activities in Tanzania as an example on how GNRC is promoting peace building and how the toolkit can be used also outside the school environment.

An evaluation was conducted at the end of the workshop. Ms. Ucko encouraged the participants to continue to work together with the GNRC coordinator to explore how the toolkit could be used inside and outside the schools community. She also underlined that the toolkit is still in progress and input and comments to the toolkit are important in shaping the final version of the toolkit.

The GNRC Coordinator, Rev. Dr Qais Sadiq closed the workshop by thanking all participants and facilitators for their active participation in the workshop contributing the success of the training. He invited the participants from Amman to a follow up session the following weekend to which the students would also be invited. He underlined the importance of building on the momentum of this training for the continuation



Main learning of the training workshop

Most of the participants found the workshop beneficial and useful. There was a general impression that the toolkit would be a useful instrument for the school community. Some of the teachers engaged in a conversation how to introduce it in the curriculum and how to make thematic sessions as part of the civic education. Participants highlighted that the main learning was received through beginning the process of internalizing the different concepts of the toolkit and through the concrete development of skills, learning how to use the toolkit and how to prepare and manage sessions. The teachers and educators also appreciated learning about and testing different methodologies proposed in the toolkit as an alternative to the methodologies normally used in the class room. To the question whether they would use the toolkit, a majority indicated that it will be possible to use it in the school community.

The Students were overall positive to the experience. They underlined the importance of working with concepts as respect and empathy for a better understanding of other cultures and religions. Among the comments in their evaluation one could read the following:

- I have learnt to respect ourselves and other people and to respect their opinions
- Learning can be fun if done in an amusing way.
- Having differences is a big advantage.
- Listening to others in a good way.
- Like the others.
- To respect others even if they don't like things that I like.
- To remember that I must help others if they are without friends.
- Respect myself first, so to respect others and spread love.
- Lift people's spirit up by our acceptance and understanding deeds.
- I have learned to respect people for who they are and never judge people by their looks.
- Empathy is the key to building a better and healthier society

The Way Forward

The Training Workshop was the first one organized specifically for teachers and educators with a focus on the school community and curriculum development. The participants will continue to be in contact with the GNRC Coordinator for the Arab countries for support as they explore ways of how to use the toolkit in their specific context. The Interfaith Council Secretariat offered continued support as the toolkit continues to take shape. Participants were encouraged to share their findings and experiences as they begin using the toolkit.

As an immediate follow up of the Training Workshop, it was suggested to arrange similar training opportunities in Lebanon and in Egypt. Other GNRC regions have expressed interest in similar training workshops for teachers and educators.

The GNRC and the Interfaith Council on Ethics Education are committed to promoting and facilitating ethics education and interfaith learning as a contribution to the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and as a concrete step towards a world fit for children.

