

**REPORT
TRAINING WORKSHOP
New Delhi, India
23-27 April 2007**

General description of the Workshop



The training workshop carried out in New Delhi, India from 23 to 27 April was the first step in a year-long training process and capacity building that the Interfaith Council on Ethics Education for Children is developing. The training workshop was organized for adults who work with children and who are interested in promoting ethics education through interfaith learning.

The workshop aimed at developing competencies in a comprehensive and practical manner, equipping the participants to use the Toolkit on Ethics Education, developed by the Interfaith Council on Ethics Education for Children. The participants were nominated by the GNRC Coordinators and came from most of the regions where GNRC network is present and active. The young adults are identified as resource persons for the GNRC network and they will continue to be involved and utilized for the dissemination and use of the recently redrafted Toolkit.

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

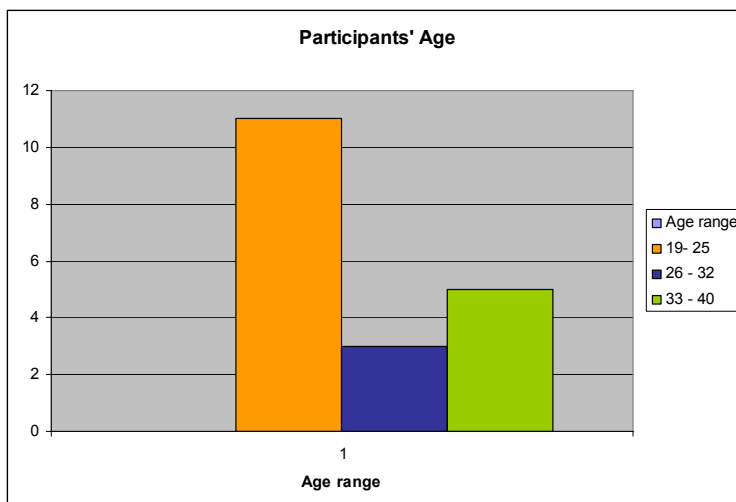
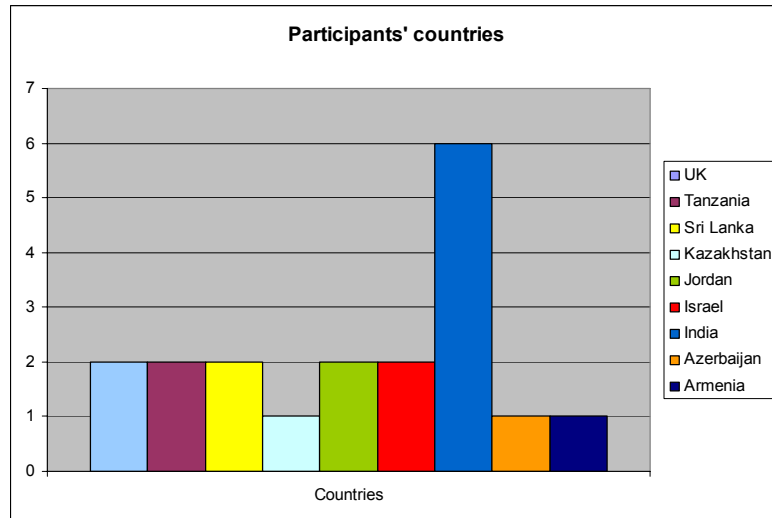
The objectives of the workshop were:

1. Develop a holistic approach to ethics education through inter-faith learning.
2. Share knowledge and provide tools to the participants on how to use the toolkit in their different regions and contexts.
3. Develop facilitation skills and learn new methodologies conducive to interfaith learning.
4. Learn ways to nurture values and spirituality
5. Embark on a training of trainers process

Background of the participants

The training workshop was organized for young adults from the different GNRC regions who are interested to promote ethics education through interfaith learning. Most of the participants are currently involved in local activities with children and young people.

19 participants from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Jordan, India, Israel, Kazakhstan, Tanzania and United Kingdom participated in the workshop. Some of them had participated already in some of the testing workshops carried out during the previous year and some others in the Training Workshop in Amman, Jordan carried out in February 2007.



11 of the 19 participants were between 19 to 25 years old, three were between 26 and 32 years old and five between 33 and 40 years old. Most of them were familiar with methodologies that promote positive critical thinking and have previously facilitated workshops or activities with children and young people.

Overview of the training workshop



The training workshop was opened with a prayer for peace and mutual understanding by Ms. Razia Ismail Abbasi, GNRC Coordinator for Central Asia and Caucasus. Ms. Abbasi was in charge of the logistical preparation of the workshop and together with her team made possible its preparation and development. Ms. Agneta Ucko, Director of the Arigatou Foundation in Geneva and Secretary General of the Interfaith Council on Ethics Education welcomed the participants 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.

During the following sessions of the day 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.

During the first session 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.

..."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. Maria Lucia Uribe, Program Officer of the Arigatou Foundation in Geneva explained to the participants the purpose and scope of the toolkit and how it is composed. She stressed the importance of nurturing values in children rather than instructing them to follow specific values. Ms. Uribe drew the attention of the participants to the need of a learning process that can help nurturing children's innate spirituality and let them think critically to make their own well-grounded decisions.

Ms. Razia Ismail Abbasi introduced the Convention on the Rights of the Child and shared experiences and cases with the participants where children's rights have been violated. She led a discussion about the importance of education and quality education and how it relates to the purpose of the ethics education initiative.



The afternoon finished with a session about spirituality. Ms. Ucko recalled how children experience fully their spirituality on a daily basis. When children ask incessant questions, when they look at things with wonder, when they lose themselves in time looking at how things work or happen, these are signs of their innate potential for spirituality. She invited participants to look at the spiritual needs and tools they use to nurture their own spirituality and encouraged them to promote an open relationship with children that allow them to continue developing their spiritual senses.



A cultural evening was organized to get to know each other better and to create bonds among the participants. It was an evening to discover oneself in relation to the others and to learn more about participants' differences and similarities. The cultural evening was an opening to discover each other during the workshop and to build bridges of trust to be able to work together.

The second day Ms. Uribe led a session on critical thinking and about the methodologies suggested in the toolkit that are conducive for critical thinking. Participants had the opportunity to prepare a short session using specific methodologies and to practice how to facilitate a session in small groups. It was a very good opportunity to work together, learn from each other and to prepare themselves for the working day with children.



In the afternoon Ms. Riham Kwar, Director of In-Service at the Amman Baccalaureate School, who was part of the facilitators' team, worked together with the participants on effective facilitation techniques. They practiced different ways of asking empowering questions and how to create a culture of thinking while working with children.



Ms. Kwar closed the afternoon with an activity to enhance participants' ability to listen to themselves and to each other. *Are We Listening?* was the title of the session, which gave the opportunity to reflect on how much we listen, to whom we listen and how empathetic we are when we listen to others.

This session was a preparation for participants to nurture attitudes that are conducive in their work with children and needed to work on ethics education through interfaith learning.

An opening ceremony was held in the evening where participants had the opportunity to interact with people from NGOs, representatives from their embassies and GNRC friends. Ms. Ucko and Ms. Abbasi thanked the guests for their participation and explained to them the objective of the training workshop. The ambassador of Jordan in India thanked for the invitation and highlighted the importance of the work the GNRC is doing in a world that needs understanding among different religions and cultures.



The third day started very early in the morning by visiting different religious places around Delhi. The visit to the oldest mosque in South Asia, to a Sikh Gurdwara, to a Synagogue, to a Christian church, to a Hindu temple and to the Bahá'í Lotus temple helped participants to get immersed in the religious diversity of India and also to internalize the importance of respecting others' beliefs. This activity was a good glance to diversity and an introspective activity to look at our own prejudices.

In the afternoon participants were divided in three groups to plan a one day session with children from Delhi schools who were invited to participate in activities to enhance their mutual understanding and respect. Participants prepared themselves to play the role of facilitators the next day. They went through the toolkit and designed their own sessions based on the modules, learning process, methodologies and activities suggested in the toolkit.

Forty five children from four different schools in Delhi attended a one-day session on the fourth day of the training workshop. They were divided in 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 different than them, and of being empathetic with other people.



The participants, now being the facilitators, let the children 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.



At the end of the day children expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to engage with young facilitators from all over the world in important issues on how to enhance respect and empathy among people of different cultures, civilizations and religions. They also voiced how they shaped their prejudices about other countries, about relations with foreigners, on being wrong or right, on how to interact with strangers and on how they perceive differences and diversity.

In the evening, participants of the training workshop participated in an Interfaith Café about the conflict Israel-Palestine presented by the two participants from Israel. Vivian Rabia, a Christian Arab born in Palestine and Rotem Mor, a Jewish born in Mevaseret Zion, gave another perspective of the conflict. Vivian and Rotem showed that walls can not separate people, that differences can not divide a country, that injustices can not take place as a way to solve differences and that peace and mutual understanding, are the ways to counteract violence.

Participants also exchanged ideas about spirituality and religiosity. They discussed the importance of including in the ethics education initiative people who do not want to consider themselves as belonging to any religious affiliation but still practice their spirituality fully. The exchange of ideas, experiences and feelings among the participants helped discovering each other from a different perspective and allowed the participants to reflect and strengthen their own beliefs.

A feedback session of the experience-based training with the children was carried out during the last day. The participants drew conclusions about their learning working in a multicultural team and with children from a different culture. They also revised how they functioned together, how they facilitated the sessions and how they used the toolkit. Ms. Ucko introduced to them the plans for the Training of Trainers Program and welcomed them to give inputs to the toolkit and to work together with the GNRC coordinators in their regions for the well being of children.





The training workshop finished with a moment of reflection led by Ms. Abbasi. She invited the participants to see the end of the workshop as the beginning of a fruitful relationship and long term involvement in the GNRC and its initiatives. Participants said good bye to each other by dancing a South Indian dance led by the participants from Coimbatore, India.

Main learning of the training workshop



Most of the participants found the workshop beneficial for their personal development. Participants highlighted that the main learning was received through discussions about the different topics of the toolkit and through informal sharing among the participants. Development of skills, learning how to use the toolkit and how to prepare and manage sessions, were found valuable as learning points. Participants also expressed a better understanding of what spirituality is and how it can be nurtured in children.

Participants recommended for future workshops that more space for discussions be created and that the workshop be interactive with more time for practicing skills and internalizing the topics of the toolkit. New ideas on how to prepare the next training workshops and how to allow participants to internalize concepts such as interfaith learning, spirituality and ethics education have already been discussed in the Interfaith Council Secretariat in Geneva, based on the suggestions and learning of the training workshop in India.

The Way Forward

The Training Workshop was the first step in a year-long training process and capacity building. The participants will continue to get online support as they organize and arrange workshops and session with children and young people in their region. They will be supported by the GNRC Coordinators and the Interfaith Council Secretariat as they practice the skills they learned at the workshop. They will be tasked to explore in more depth an issue of their choice which is important and at the core of the Toolkit and share their findings with the other participants in this training. During the year the Council Secretariat will arrange thematic workshops either over weekends or online. In a year's time, the group of young adults will be invited to a follow up workshop to share their experiences and acquire skills to become a multiplier of the skills they have got during this training process.

The Interfaith Council and the GNRC are aware of the need to empower young adults to continue working on ethics education and are also confident that the selection of young facilitators will activate their commitment towards a world fit for children and will provide the space and opportunity to promote new ideas, fresh experiences and creativity in our work with children and young people.