

A BRIEF REPORT ON IARF YOUNG ADULT PROJECT IN INDIA

Tirunelveli Project (26 February-2nd March 2004)

Over six days, a South Asia-level young adult programme was held at two venues in Tamil Nadu, India - Tirunelveli and Tenkasi - by IARF's RFYN in conjunction with its South Asia Coordinating Council.

Participants were 35 young adults (three each from Nepal and Sri Lanka, 13 from other parts of India and 16 local), both male and female and from different faith backgrounds.

Through a balanced mix of indoor and outdoor discussions, interactions and activities, the programme sought to create awareness of the importance of promoting interfaith harmony, tolerance and religious freedom among the participants and the local communities,

In the indoor programme, the young adults shared information about their faith traditions, beliefs and practices. They discussed issues around religious freedom and interfaith in their respective countries and areas, along with ways and means of promoting inter-religious harmony, understanding and tolerance; and they designed activities towards that end through group exercises.

Among the outdoor activities, the young adults visited a few local schools and mingled with the teachers and students. The schoolchildren presented colourful cultural programmes, and the young adults themselves presented small skits on the theme of interfaith harmony. Then they visited a *Madrassa* - an Islamic studies college in Tenkasi. A unique experience was an interactive meeting with a panel of local political leaders from different parties on the subject of interfaith harmony and religious freedom. Besides visiting different places of worship to understand religions better, and the Swami Vivekananda Memorial at Kanniyakumari, the young adults performed *Shramadhan* (physical labour) by cleaning and whitewashing a temple, a mosque and a church in Tirunelveli.

Visakhapatnam Programme (6-8 March 2004)

The Visakhapatnam programme involved 30 local young adults representing different religions. They discussed issues affecting interfaith understanding, tolerance and religious freedom - local in particular, and national in general. The young adults also designed appropriate programmes as responses for promotion of religious harmony and tolerance. A visit to different places of worship within the City was also organised.