



international association for

religious freedom
belief with integrity

Human Rights Education Workshop

Held at

SamagraMathru-SishuSamrakshanaKendram

(Integral Mother-Child Care Center),

Kurumthar, Pathanamthitta, Kerala.

On

19-20 January, 2013



Participants with Facilitator and SACC Chairman

REPORT

Facilitator: Prof. Jyothiraj T.K.

(Principal, Jameela Beevi Memorial Centre for Teacher Education, Kayamkulam, Kerala)

At a Glance

Venue	: <i>Samagra Mathru-Sishu Samrakshana Kendram</i> (Integral Mother-Child Care Center), Kurumthar, Pathanamthitta, Kerala.
Date	: 19-20 January, 2013
Facilitators	: Prof. T.K. Jyothiraj
Number of Participants	: 30
Gender Balance	: Female-30
Age Group	: 17-55
Religious Representation	: Hinduism (Comprising various sub castes like Ezhava, Pulaya, Sambhava and Nair)-29 & Christianity-1

Introduction

Two day HRE workshop was held at Integral Mother-Child Care Center, Kurumthar, Pathanamthitta, Kerala on 19-20 January 2013. Prof. T.K. Jyothiraj, Principal of Jameela Beevi Memorial Centre for Teacher Education, Kayamkulam, Kerala facilitated the program. The workshop was aimed to follow up the beneficiaries of previous HRE held on 9-10 May 2009 at Dalit/Adivasi (indigenous) Settlement Colony, Kurumthar and to strengthen people, especially women to face life and handle various issues happening in day to day life. The region, noted for its Dalit¹ and Adivasi² settlement was a center of constant attacks and violence. Now the situation has been improved a lot and people of the community have been engaged in various social and semi-governmental activities. IARF SACC through its active presence in the region strengthened them to face life with much courage and boldness. In fact, a transition has been taken place in the village. Now students are given with lots of educational opportunities and employment openings. Especially two beneficiaries of our previous workshop, who were bold enough to share their concerns, have made significant progress in their lives. Now, one has become an employee at International Airport Trivandrum and other's daughter finished her Post Graduate Studies and Teacher Training from Govt. Teachers Training College, Elanthoor, Pathanamthitta, interestingly where SACC has also organized the HRE workshop (20-21 November 2010). She is a promising person of the region and going to teach many students in spite of their religion, caste and creed. Now the gap between higher and lower class/caste will get reduced. She can impart the knowledge to many in the days to come. However still the ghost of the caste system prevails here and usually Dalits (so called untouchables) are regarded as socially outcaste and mostly they live in remote areas with limited income and land. For drinking and domestic water needs they mainly use well. During five months summer they have to depend outside sources, mainly other areas where upper class dominates and they are not happy with them. The issue was highlighted in the discussion, and Chairman guaranteed his intervention for the public water system should be extended in the main corners of the settlement colony of Dalit.

Same time in one way or other inter-caste and social problems still exist in the region. The concern expressed by some of the participants is related to "lack of respect given to elders" in the lower class and Dalit society. Most often upper class young generation addresses elders of lower class, who are four or five times older than them by name, which is not the case of the elders in upper-class, they are usually addressed in due respect, using surnames or sir, and otherwise they feel they are humiliated by the lower class which ultimately leads to clashes and unrest. Along with this many of them expressed their concern and insecurity to womanhood, on the wake of some of the recent incidents that really threatened the conscience of common people. They have also complained that most often justice is denied or delayed to them from governmental side.

Analyzing the situation existed in the region, organizing an HRE workshop was a timely action of IARF SACC and people of the region wholeheartedly welcomed and cooperated with us to carry out the program.

¹ Belongs to lowest social and ritual class in India, also known as *Harijans*; earlier they were untouchables.

² Aboriginal Natives

Main Aim

- Sensitize people about the rights of freedom of religion and belief.
- Promote mutual respect and trust among people
- Promote religious harmony and peace in villages through empowering women.

Objective

Educate people about human rights and religious freedom; minimize socio-cultural conflict in the society.

1st Session

- Greetings from the facilitator
- Introduction of participants and their expectation.
- Identifying their concerns about intolerance, religious discrimination and Conflict- sharing and categorizing their concerns.
- Social purposes, learning goal, social goal of this HRE workshop.
- Proposing goal for social change to overcome obstacles to religious Freedom - Sharing goals.
- Thinking about action.

2nd Session

- Reading, acknowledging and clarifying- Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).
- The declaration on the Elimination of all forms of intolerance and discrimination based on religion or belief (DIDRB).
- Major Human Rights Treaties
- Relate the goals of the participants to the rights describe in the UDHR and DIDRB

3rd session

- Film show - 'Rita's Choices'
- Responding the film - awakening their awareness
- Analyses the injustice within a Human Rights framework.
- Alternative views and application of HR to prevent such injustices

4th session

- Review – Rita's Choices on the light of DIDRB and the said goal
- Film Show – 'Sacred Grove'
- Responding the film - awakening their awareness
- Inquiry about multiple injustices
- Analyses the injustice within a Human Rights framework.
- Alternative views and application of HR to prevent such injustices
- Action to be undertaken

5th session

- Review of Sacred Grove on the light of said goal
- Film show - 'Where is Home'
- Responding to the film - awakening their awareness
- Inquiry about multiple injustices
- Analyze the inter-religious injustice within a Human Rights framework.
- Alternative views and application of HR to prevent such injustices

6th session

- Reviewing their concern and goals

- Recommending actions
- Planning action for social change
- Strategic planning for action

Methodology

Group works - discussions, lectures, case studies, Audio visual learning and group report presentation.

Issues rose

Hatred, humiliation, mutual disrespect, social conflicts etc were raised and discussed.

Assumptions

Dalits are dominated in this area. They are always subjected to multiple exploitations especially of human rights and religious freedom.

Risk factors

Since the participants were Dalits in majority, it was very difficult to highlight many issues, since they are very sensitive to such issues.

Expected learning outcomes

Short-term

Participants will be able to change their mind set up and will be oriented and motivated to accept each other, especially high class will equally respect them give enough space in the society.

Long-term

All sorts of social violence, conflicts and tension will be resolved. Social and communal harmony will be displayed in the community.

Resources Required

Cooperation and man power support from the community. Their support was immense in organizing the program. Teaching and training materials viz., pen, paper, laptop, flip charts etc were required.

Language Problem

Language problem was existed, because majority of the participants were unable to follow English. Therefore Malayalam (vernacular) was frequently used.

Location

Samagra Mathru-Sishu Samrakshana Kendram (Integral Mother-Child Care Center), Kurumthar, Pathanamthitta, Kerala.

Why have you chosen this community/ target group?

Actually, this workshop was in part of follow up the community, as mentioned in the introduction, an HRE was already organized in the community few years back and since then SACC office has in constant touch with the society. As a result tremendous changes began to take place in the community. So SACC thought that there must be another HRE to educate and motivate new generation and new people.

Balance of gender, ages etc?

The workshop was exclusively to deal with the issues of women and empower them. Therefore all participants were female.

Do you have ice-breaking /team building activities?

Yes

How many people from each faith attended?

The community is occupied by low class Hindus. However members of higher class and Christianity attended the program.

Hinduism (Ezhava, Pulaya, Sambhava and Nair)-29 & Christianity-1

Name of Potential Mediator

Ragini Vishwanadhan (Social Activist)

Participants' Comments



Anila Anil (F), 30, Hindu, SC

“New generation of high class is not at all giving respect to the elders of lower class. Most often they address them simply calling by name, who are older than their parents. This attitude has to change, and all has equal status. Community has to pretest and avoid this kind of attitude”. (Ms. Anila completed her Post Graduation and Teacher Training)

Pramala Prasannan (F), 38, Hindu, SC, Pulaya

“High class people in the society are always against our progress. When we need a pathway or road to our house, most often they are rigid in nature and do not allow us to have roads, and even houses. In my opinion this kind of workshop must be given to them and educate them the basics of social life”.



Jaya Vijayan (F), 36, Hindu, SC, Pulaya

“This kind of workshop is very informative and relevant to present day situation in India. Always women are subjected to various exploitation and discrimination. This seminar really helped us to recognize our power and privileges. Thanks a lot to respected facilitator and its organizers”.

Bindhu T.V. (F), 35, Hindu, SC, Sambava

“I feel much happy and proud after attending the workshop. The issues dealt in the workshops were very useful and relevant to the contemporary situations. Freedom to live peacefully in the society must be a reality in common people’s life, without disharmony and disputes. The messages of films were thought provoking and eventually paved way for serious discussions. Thanks to IARF for organizing and allowing us to take part in the seminar”.



SulojanaSaji (F), 40, Hindu, OBC, Ezhava

“I am victim of social discrimination and human rights violations. Whenever I go a government or semi-government office, the officials simply make me in trouble. Though I am eligible to get various grants from government, often im given nothing. This situations has to go for a paradigm shift and all must be treated equally, irrespective of their social and religious background”.

View Photos: <http://www.iarfsacc.org/media/photos/index.php?cat=90>