

The Writers



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MANUAL INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

MANUAL INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE



In Cooperation with:



**MANUAL FOR INTERRELIGIOUS
DIALOGUE**

A Publication of:



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Acronyms

AGEH	Arbeitsgemeinschaft Entwicklungshilfe
ANV	Active Non-Violence
CYU	Chemchemi Ya Ukweli
CPS	Civil Peace Service
IRD	Inter-Religious Dialogue
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
OFM	Franciscans Friars Minor
P.B	Peace Building
TOT	Training of Trainers
ZFD	Ziviler Friedensdienst

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Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
 Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
 where there is injury, pardon;
 where there is doubt, faith;
 where there is despair, hope;
 where there is darkness, light;
 and where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
 to be consoled as to console;
 to be understood as to understand;
 to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive;
 it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
 and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Amen

Saint Francis of Assisi

Forward

Kenya is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society with the major religions being Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and the Baha'i Faith. Others are the Jews, Buddhists and African Traditional Religions. The interaction, on a daily basis, among people of different faiths therefore, in this kind of a society is inevitable.

The potential for violent conflicts within this context is insurmountable, and to change from a culture of violence into a culture of peace requires a transformation of problems to creative and constructive solutions that answer the needs of those involved.

When we think about violence, discrimination and exclusion, the challenges may seem to be insoluble. However, these challenges are fundamentally connected. Ignorance and misunderstandings and assumptions based on a lack of communication and mistrust, feed discrimination and violence.

Just as there can be common roots of violence, discrimination and exclusion, there can also be common solutions. Successfully addressing these three humanitarian challenges requires a change of mindsets, attitudes and behavior.

We all need to come to the place of embracing a universal mind and behavior shift from the way we currently think and interact: from being locked into differences to valuing diversity and pluralism; from adverse reaction to joint response and even further to proactive prevention; from exclusion based on fear to connection based on our common humanity; and from resorting to verbal or physical violence when feeling threatened to constructive dialogue and trust.

We are in urgent need of a values-based transformation of human behavior that is easily attainable through Interreligious Dialogue. As we start with ourselves, seeing that we all carry bias and prejudice, awareness, question-

ing and critical self-reflection will help break conditioning or correct bias learned through schooling, media and upbringing.

Though the country has had no ‘purely’ religious conflicts, CYU’s history with interfaith activities goes back to the year 1997.

When the political climates in the country was very high due to the agitation for a new constitution, the men religious of Kenya under the auspices of catholic religious men from different congregations met on a monthly basis, to evaluate the political situation in Kenya.

Inspired by the success of the no violent protests in the Philippines that borrowed from Mahatma Gandhi, in one of the meetings, it was unanimously agreed that the people demonstrate in a way that would send a message of non violence, as opposed to the violence that was being meted to the protesters by government.

This led to the invitation of team of trainers, which included: Rev. Richard Deats, Father Joseph Blanco and Tess Ramiro. The team had long years of experience in training on ANV in the Philippines and the whole idea was to borrow from this experience.

Before they left they did a Training of Trainers with various organizations and individuals and on 13th October 1997 the beneficiaries of this trainings came together to form the ANV movement and Chemchemi was the name given to the movement.

When the first interfaith meeting was held on 13th July 2000 at CYU Board room, as a result of tensions and conflicts among people of different religions in Kenya leading to violence particularly between the Muslims and Christians in Northern Kenya.

Though the country has had no ‘purely’ religious conflicts, CYU’s history with interfaith activities goes back to the year 2000 when the first interfaith meeting was held on 13th July 2000 at CYU Board room, as a result of

tensions and conflicts among people of different religions in Kenya leading to violence particularly between the Muslims and Christians in Northern Kenya.

With the backdrop of the 2007/2008 post election violence, and the recent Al-Shabaab attacks in Garissa and parts of Nairobi, the urgency for religions to have dialogue can no longer be left to be a theoretical discourse for civil society to continue having in isolation. Religious organizations can no longer be left to live separately as a result of their implantation in different geographical spaces and cultures.

Though there is sizeable documentation on interreligious dialogue in the form of essays, thesis and reports, there is no substantial manual that exists in print to give practical handles on the “how” of conducting an IRD session, making this manual a probable first of its kind.

This manual was developed with the trainer in mind, to be a “one stop shop” where he/she can be able to find concepts as well as content within the context of his/her scope of training. It aims at providing guidelines that are practical and reproducible, such that the trainer may not really need to be a religious scholar to bring out principles that would enrich an interreligious training program.

The manual emerges with sound principles that envisage the coming together of religious people, on the basis of commonality and widely shared values with the intention of realizing an environment of trust and a network of co-operation.

The inter-religious dialogue training manual therefore poses to seize the opportune faith based structures that would enhance the inculcation of culture of trust, continuous sharing, co-operation and sustainable collaboration among religious communities and the entire Kenya populace.

It is targeted to provide the lead in mobilizing, facilitating and building the blocks towards identification and pre-emption of violence and reconciliation at the religious organizational levels.

The manual visualizes the training of forum members and modelling them into community of hope, solidarity, forgiveness and advocates for understanding, tolerance and respect within the entire society.

Dominic Kariuki,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D.Kariuki', with a stylized flourish at the end.

CEO ChemchemiYa Ukweli

Objectives:

The objectives of this IRD manual are to:

- (i) develop a better understanding of the potential contributions of IRD to peacebuilding;
- (ii) analyze comparative advantages, limitations, risks and critical factors; and
- (iii) Provide guidance to external actors supporting civil society initiatives for peacebuilding.

Methodology:

The development of the manual followed these steps:

- (i) literature review on IRD, peacebuilding, conflict and teambuilding
- (ii) interviews with religious leaders from across the target group:- Islam, Baha'i Faith, Christianity and Hindu
- (iii) Follow up case studies to illustrate the impact of IRD within society and identify further opportunities; and
- (iv) Field visit to community of practice in Garissa where an actual dialogue on the growing insecurity in the area was undertaken.
- (v) Conclusions and recommendations for application by religious organizations.

Audience:

The manual targets trainers, religious leaders, and may also be of interest to community leaders in areas with a diverse religious population.

Scope and Limitations:

Though there is an obvious need to expand the reach of the manual to more religious organizations, it presently focuses on the organizations represented within the National steering committee of Interreligious Dialogue.

Within the limitations of time and resources, the authors recognize that this manual cannot do justice to the many forms of dialogues and topics

that can be engaged in, and does not address the issue of the importance of having the different people groups having dialogue meetings e.g. women, youth etc— to do justice and fully cover this gap would probably require a separate manual(s).

However, it does provide handles in its format that a trainer could use to conduct trainings with various groups.

How to use this manual

Religious leaders and their communities have the moral authority to raise awareness about the general issues affecting their societies beyond the dogmatic and doctrinal preaching. In the years since world leaders adopted the MDGs, local, national and global civil society coalitions have formed and taken action to raise awareness and pressure their governments to keep their promises. Religious leaders and their organizations must then be bold enough to join in the fray and engage in advocacy efforts and put pressure on their governments to fulfill their responsibilities.

Section 1

Can be used to help the users gain awareness and understanding of IRD. It provides a general overview of IRD and its History. The pages list the basic concepts of IRD, conceptual challenges, History, definitions and on how the different world's religious traditions can coexist in a rapidly evolving society.

Section 2

Using Hans Küng's "towards a Global ethic" this section offers useful information to the trainer and participants. It provides information on the thematic and conceptual Principles of IRD, a training agenda, Interreligious collaboration and gives specific tips for a planning and developing an IRD workshop. The section also includes general tips for the training modules while providing outlines, scriptures, ice breakers and role playing that would enhance the training workshops.

Section 3 provides trainers using this manual with practical tips and tools for preparing an IRD workshop, as well as a list of resources that can be used for the making the workshops succeed.

Introduction

“There will be no peace among the nations without peace among the religions. There will be no peace among the religions without dialogue among the religions.”-Dr Hans Küng, 31 March 2005, at the opening of an exhibit on the world’s religions at Santa Clara University

The words of Dr Hans Küng accurately capture the importance and the mindset required for Inter Religious Dialogue: an attitude that is willing to step away from the comfort and safety of what is familiar into an un-explored world of possibility for the sake of peace. Engaging in IRD demands that we overcome our own fears and prejudices risk notwithstanding, and step out into the world, both to discover and be discovered.

Religion has played a significant role in the history of humankind with slanted interpretations of religious scripture and history many times being partial and subjective. This has often led to hostility and extremism, some of which continue to affect society even today.

History and the benefit of hindsight continue to serve as a source from which we can learn, understand previous mistakes and prevent new ones from occurring. It is important to be aware of historic events and the fact that they carry with them the capacity to create cleavages that limit the potential that lies in collaboration between and among varied religious communities.

That stated however, History also has many positive examples of peaceful dialogue that can serve as reference points to inspire us today.

The experiences of people from different religious communities living next door to each other

The manual also aims to provide trainers with practical information on specific considerations they need to make in the organization of events that involve religiously diverse groups.

and yet far away from each other's worlds are not uncommon in the integrated communities we are all forced to live in.

Challenges arising from the presence of diversity continue to affect the lives of believers and practitioners of different faiths and their well-being in society. However, everyday encounters across faith-divides are valuable but not equivalent to the practice of IRD, as it is used for peace and justice-making. When employed as a tool or strategic practice, IRD refers to facilitated discussions on specific topics held between members of different faith communities, with an expressed objective or objectives.

At a moment in history when the political climate in Kenya through the promulgation of the new constitution provides space to link these worlds, it is prudent for religious organizations to contribute to this goal through promotion of dialogue between their communities. Religious organizations would do well to use this moment to get active in the field of inter-religious learning and dialogue, and promote it at different levels and in different contexts.

Where individual religious beliefs fail to provide a diverse religious education for the issues relevant for integration and peaceful coexistence, IRD has the potential to and must embrace the responsibility to fill this gap.

This IRD facilitator training manual is targeted at faith-based organizations working at local, national, regional levels, with an aim to encourage platforms that can be used to explore possibilities of conflict transformation and peace building within the contexts of their work. The manual also aims to provide trainers with practical information on specific considerations they need to make in the organization of events that involve religiously diverse groups.

Where individual religious beliefs fail to provide a diverse religious education for the issues relevant for integration and peaceful coexistence, IRD has the potential to and must embrace the responsibility to fill this gap.

It can be used as a reference for activities, as an information background on the specificities of the four major world religions that are the focus for this

manual (Baha'i Faith, Christianity, Hinduism, and Islam) as a tool for learning about the concept of IRD, and as a way of exploring the similarities between the different religions.

Though this guide cuts across many different training needs and is intended for conducting an IRD workshop for different religious audiences, the guidelines and training aids are primarily directed towards trainers and parts of these texts will be of great assistance and interest to developing and experienced trainers.

The desired outcome of this manual is to allow participants to use their religious faith and tradition not only to build relationships, but also as doorways into discussions about central social and political concerns that potentially drive inter-communal conflict. The purpose is not to teach them how to debate in the sense that one side seeks to 'win' an argument by aggressively challenging or seeking to delegitimize the viewpoint of another, but rather to facilitate respectful interactions with the purpose of hearing and understanding the other's perspective.

The IRD manual is divided into three parts (sections 1-3) with Part one serving as an information point, mainly gathering theoretical information on IRD, its history and objectives within the Kenyan context. As with the rest of this work, it is not intended to act as an academic research, but will endeavor to provide useful information on the motives and objectives of IRD and its current state of development. This part will also make the facilitator understand how important it is for religious organizations to get involved in developing and improving the current reality of IRD. This section will also deal with stereotypes and prejudices related to religions, and aims to give the facilitator handles, hints, tools and examples that will get them started in IRD.



Part two will give the reader tips on some preconditions that should be usefully kept in mind and implemented in order to develop fruitful dialogue activity. Building upon the thesis by the famous Swiss scholar Hans Küng's "Towards a Global ethic", this section will give the perspectives of the four world religions mentioned earlier that will be the focus of discussion for this manual.

Building upon that, part three will gather an overview of tools that have been developed by several organizations and international institutions, giving the facilitator clear definitions of training terms, a wide range of tools, activities scenarios, case studies, references etc to make it a "one stop toolkit" for the facilitator as they get into training.

Section 1:
Basic concepts and definitions

Basic concepts and definitions

Active non-violence and interreligious dialogue

It is the inherent right of every human being on this planet to live in peace. In pursuit of this basic human right, Mahatma Gandhi concluded that the only hope for the human race was for every one of us to become nonviolent. He concluded that we were created to live nonviolently with one another. To be human, he said, is to be nonviolent. The whole world has to reject violence and adopt the wisdom and practice of active nonviolence. Nonviolence, he determined, is our only way toward a future of peace with justice. Nonviolence therefore is the first and most essential ingredient if every human being alive is to possess all their human rights-(quoted from the introduction of “Human Rights and Nonviolence: The Christian Theology and Movement for Peace” By John Dear July 2003)

As we begin to delve into our study, to enhance our understanding of IRD, it is imperative to look at Active non-violence,(ANV) as the foundation upon which interreligious dialogue would be built.

While it is common knowledge that no Religion or Faith expounds violence in any form, the last several decades have experienced a rise in religious militancy, which has dominated the global political agendas. Religious militancy has been characterized by the use of force or coercion that is justified through ideological rhetoric as has been experienced in the Killing of Christians by the suicide bombers from the Islamist sect known as *Boko Haram* (*Boko Haram* means “Western education is sacrilege” in the Hausa language of Nigeria’s north. Northern parts of Nigeria)

Looking back at the two world wars in the latter century that took millions of lives and affected the economic structure of the major nations of the world, it has been proven that peaceful measures have been successful in attaining goals. It

“We recognize that crucial issues divide us. But for our conversations to be fruitful and honoring to God, we must stop misrepresenting and caricaturing each other, always speaking the truth in love. -Craig Blomberg

was leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. and their philosophical application of nonviolence that broke through the rigid barriers of their time and achieved radical changes on a political, social, economic and religious constructs.



In the modern day context, the approach of non-violent rhetoric can be translated into inter-religious dialogue. With the processes of globalization, inter-religious dialogue has been utilized as the contemporary measure to not only resolve disputes, but more importantly, increase tolerance and prevent conflicts from arising. Given the religious rhetoric often misused in the name of political gain by extremist groups, inter-religious dialogue has been an essential tool to tackle this rise of religious based violence.

Thus to counteract the militancy, nations and governments now need to form a platform between and among the different faiths that speaks a common language and promotes a common cause for betterment of humanity.

In order to counter violence that has been advocated in the name of religion, faith based negotiations and communication is the key word for religious leaders where they diminish the difference which is only a modality and pursue the basic believe in the Creator and love for mankind.

The real practitioners of the spirituality of ANV

The real models of ANV that give us an interface between ANV and IRD have actually been the spiritual leaders of our times, who by daring to live by the tenets of their faith, were ushered into a dimension of livelihood that makes them icons we can draw principles from.

Every time one considers how to live humanly in our inhuman world, the answer is always the same: steadfast, persistent, dedicated, committed, pa-



tient, relentless, truthful, prayerful, loving, active nonviolence as lived out by one Mahatma Gandhi.

Mahatma Gandhi's legacy includes not just the brilliantly waged struggle against institutionalized racism in South Africa, the independence movement of India, and a groundbreaking path of interreli-

gious dialogue, but also boasts the first widespread application of nonviolence as *the* most powerful tool for positive social change. Gandhi's nonviolence was not just political: It was rooted and grounded in the spiritual, which is why he exploded not just onto India's political stage, but onto the world stage, and not just temporally, but for all times.

Gandhi was, first and foremost, a religious man in search of God. For more than fifty years, he pursued truth, proclaiming that the best way to discover truth was through the practice of active, faith-based nonviolence.

When he was assassinated on January 30, 1948, the world hailed him as one of the greatest spiritual leaders, not just of the century, but of all time. He was ranked with Thoreau, Leo Tolstoy, and St. Francis. "Generations to come will scarce believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth," Albert Einstein wrote at the time.

In response to a letter Gandhi had written to him, Leo Tolstoy wrote back that Gandhi was offering not just South Africa, but the whole world, a new way to fight injustice through the practice of loving resistance on a massive scale. Where Tolstoy had theorized and theologized about such a program, Gandhi was living it.

Below is an excerpt from "*Human Rights and Nonviolence: The Christian Theology and Movement for Peace*"-By John Dear July 2003

Martin Luther King, Jr. epitomized the modern Christian vocation of active non-violence. He taught nonviolence around the nation through his sermons, lectures and most of all, his campaign against segregation and racism. But one year to the day before he was assassinated, on April 4, 1967, this great prophet of nonviolence broke new ground when he linked the struggle for civil rights and equality with peace and an end to the war in Vietnam. King connected all the issues in the web of life and summoned us to protect the rights of everyone, including the right of the suffering Vietnamese people to live in peace without fear of our napalm. "Somehow this madness must cease," he said that night in his famous speech at the Riverside church in New York City. "We must stop it now. I speak as a child of God and brother to the suffering poor of Vietnam. I speak for those whose land is being laid waste, whose homes are being destroyed, whose culture is being subverted. I speak for the poor of America who are paying the double price of smashed hopes at home and death and corruption in Vietnam. I speak as a citizen of the world, for the world as it stands aghast at the path we have taken. I speak as an American to the leaders of my own nation. The great initiative in this war is ours. The initiative to stop it must be ours... America, the richest and most powerful nation in the world, can well lead



**RELIGIOUS LEADERS ATTENDING AN IRD MEETING AT
UFUNGAMANO**

the way in this revolution of values. There is nothing, except a tragic death wish, to prevent us from reordering our priorities, so that the pursuit of peace will take precedence over the pursuit of war. . . . We still have a choice: nonviolent coexistence or violent co-annihilation.”

On the night before he was assassinated, Dr. King said in Memphis, “In the human rights revolution, if something isn’t done, and in a hurry, to bring the people of color in the world out of their long years of poverty, their long years of hurt and neglect, the whole world is doomed.” King called to link all the issues as one struggle for the nonviolent transformation of humanity. He did so as a Christian, a follower of the nonviolent Jesus.

Nonviolence begins in the heart where we renounce the violence within us. Then it moves out with active nonviolence to our families, local communities, cities, nation and the world. When organized on the large scale level, active nonviolence can transform nations and the world, as Gandhi demonstrated with India’s revolution from Britain, as Dr. King and the civil rights movement revealed, as the People Power movement showed in the Philippines, and as Archbishop Tutu, Nelson Mandela and the struggling, heroic blacks of South Africa showed against apartheid.

Gandhi dreamed of a new world of nonviolence, where we fund and support unarmed international peace teams that travel to conflict zones, disarm opposing sides, and work out peaceful resolutions. He hoped every school, religious and civic organization in the world would teach children to act and live according to the discipline of nonviolence. He taught that where nonviolence has been tried, it has worked.

Today, nonviolence is spreading throughout the world as never before, but it receives little attention on the evening news. Nonetheless, it remains the only way forward if we are to secure the human right of peace for every person alive.

Nonviolence begins in the heart where we renounce the violence within us. Then it moves out with active nonviolence to our families, local communities, cities, nation and the world



Youth Taking part in a training by CYU.

What is dialogue?

The word dialogue is a combination of the two Greek words: *dia*, meaning “through,” and *logos*, interpreted as “word or meaning.” To engage in dialogue is therefore to engage in making meaning through the spoken/

written word.

Simply stated, interreligious dialogue involves “meeting people themselves and getting to know their religious traditions.”

More formally, it consists of “discussions for mutual understanding held among differing religious bodies; the interaction of mutual presence... speaking and listening...witnessing the commitments, the values, and the rituals of others.” According to the Presbyterian Church (USA), dialogue is “witnessing to our deepest convictions and listening to those of our neighbors.”

The simplest form of interreligious dialogue is when two individuals, be they friends, neighbors, or acquaintances, discuss their religious beliefs in a casual setting. For example, a Christian youth may be invited to the birthday party of a Moslem child, or a Baha’i Faith neighbor may speak with a Hindu over the backyard fence.

Within such an informal setting, these discussions are irreplaceable in their value, and in promoting better understanding among the discussants from the different religions that make up our pluralistic society. However, such discussions do not constitute formal interreligious dialogue.

In order for true, effective IRD to occur, certain basic elements must be present:

Each person has a voice and their voice is heard and equally valued: Top-down structures of relationship and communication that exist externally among members in a group are to be avoided in an interreligious forum.

Equality of participation: An IRD encounter must recognize the nature of the different religions and their different perceptions, assumptions, and opinions that are brought to any given issue. (An establishment of group norms or ground

rules is necessary and they must include treating every person's perspective with respect.)

Each person has a voice and their voice is heard and equally valued: Top-down structures of relationship and communication that exist externally among members in a group are to be avoided in an interreligious forum.

No threat of retribution, judgment, or coercion is allowed and no one's opinion "trumps" another's: Title and position should not be permitted to influence how individual ideas and options are given and received.

No pre-conceived outcome: There are no preset outcomes or decisions toward which the group is steered to be towards or manipulated.

Open agenda: The agenda is not hidden, and the only purpose of convening the group is to engage in authentic communication and exchange of ideas/information.

Rather than defining dialogue as a search for *agreement*, it would be more helpful to define dialogue as a search for *understanding*. To understand another tradition, the people engaged in the dialogue do not necessarily have to, neither are they compelled to agree with one another's precepts. They even do not have to create 'common ground' in terms of religious belief to proceed.

A deeper definition then would term interreligious dialogue as a cooperative, constructive and positive interaction between people of different religious traditions/faiths and/or spiritual or humanistic beliefs, at both

the individual and institutional levels. It must be distinguished from syncretism or alternative religion, in that dialogue involves the promotion of understanding between different religions to increase acceptance of others, rather than to synthesize new beliefs.

The Qur'an outlines the form that dialogue should take and the way in which it should be conducted. It suggests that Muslim interaction with other faiths should not be restricted to an exchange of information. It should also reflect a proper demeanor and attitude. As the Qur'an states, *'And discuss with them in the best way.'* It further states, *'Do not discuss with the people of the book except in the best of ways, apart from those who are unjust among themselves' (29:46).*

According to the Professor of Catholic Thought and Inter-Religious Dialogue at Temple University, Leonard Swidler, interfaith dialogue operates in three areas: 'the practical, where we collaborate to help humanity; the depth or "spiritual" dimension, where we attempt to experience the partner's religion or ideology "from within"; and the cognitive, where we seek



understanding of the truth'. (Engaging across divides: interfaith dialogue for peace and justice-Susan Hayward)

IRD contemplates a deeper knowledge of the present religions, their beliefs, and their way of looking at things, their own sensitivity, all with a view to the cooperation of believers for a supportive and understanding world.

Within dialogue, there is a searching for a common ground and a declaration that religions share a responsibility for the well being of humankind and for the preservation of the Earth. Above all, it fosters an attitude of respect for people of different beliefs.

Dialogue can be understood in various ways. The Vatican document *Dialogue and Proclamation* describes three meanings. On the one hand, dialogue can refer at the purely human level to “reciprocal communication, leading to a common goal or ... to interpersonal communion.” On the other hand, it can mean “an attitude of respect and friendship” ideally permeating all activities with “the spirit of dialogue”. Finally, in contexts of religious plurality, it denotes “all positive and constructive interreligious relations with individuals and communities of other faiths which are directed at mutual understanding and enrichment, in obedience to truth and respect for freedom.”

This final definition points to a number of characteristics of dialogue, namely, that it is positive and constructive, includes “relations” in general rather than being restricted to conversation. It has the aim of mutual understanding and enrichment, and involves truth and respect. Dialogue can then be characterized as honest, open, active communication, presupposing

Within dialogue, there is a searching for a common ground and a declaration that religions share a responsibility for the well being of humankind and for the preservation of the Earth.

mutual acceptance and generosity of heart, and encompassing the possibility of being changed by the truth of the other.

Effective dialogue enables participants (and later

non-participants) to correctly identify areas of genuine religious disagreement, as well as identify misconceptions regarding the beliefs and practices of different religions.

In a world where people from different religious communities are living next door to each other and yet far away from each other's worlds, IRD shows respect to others by welcoming them into your "world" yet leaving no place for exclusion or absorption. IRD can take on different forms that are nevertheless connected. The Four principal types of dialogue are listed below:

The dialogue of life –

In a world where suspicion and indifference is prevalent, religions should endeavor to bring people together; values such as hospitality and mutual respect need to be embodied and through sharing and trust, relationships can be set up with neighbours or other people we encounter in our daily life, who profess different beliefs.



Participants in an IRD training in Garissa 2011.

Case study: A Parish in Dialogue:

Established as a parish in its own right in 1985, St. Stephen's lies some 14 km to the East of the centre of Khartoum on the old desert road to Kassala. It is a parish run by the *Missionaries of Africa*. Good relations are maintained between the parish community, which in 2006 comprised two priests and two young stagiaires, and the Muslim neighbours. An on-going '**dialogue of life**' was conducted through house-visits, help of various kinds, greetings on feasts and sharing the every-days joys and sorrows of the neighbours.

Indeed one of the young stagiaires who was still in his first year in 2006 attended, for five days each week, an intensive Arabic Language course at the African Islamic University. He began a course in Sudanese colloquial Arabic at the Catholic Language Institute, but this lasted for only a short time due to a dearth of students.

Augustine, from Burkina Faso, found himself the only Christian in his class. He completed two months of his course and reported that he has been warmly received by his teachers and by his fellow students. Augustine lived that dialogue about which we speak through his daily encounters with Muslims – a Christian witnessing to his faith in what some might have considered a daunting setting. (Source-Chemchemi ya Ukweli)

Dialogue that searches for common causes –

Different faiths also come together to stress values such as Peace and Justice. An unfair and violent action damages not only the victim but also the perpetrator – with these kinds of actions humankind is hurting itself. The shared emphasis upon ethical values by the different world faiths can inspire them to search for a more harmonious and sustainable world, and strive against injustice together.

Case study:

In the same parish (St. Stephens) in Khartoum, When Dr. John Garang, the Southern leader, died in a terrible helicopter crash during a storm in

the South of Sudan on July 29th, 2005. Shocked Southerners accused the Government of complicity in his death and riots broke out in many parts of the country. Khartoum and its teeming suburbs bore the brunt of the killing and the looting. Northerners responded in kind and many homes – even the poorest – were destroyed and people were beaten or killed.

When order was restored and emotions calmed, at the initiative of the parish priest, a service of prayer for reconciliation was held in the parish in Hajj Yousif which had been particularly badly hit in the troubles. Many Muslim dignitaries and religious leaders attended this prayer, an attempt to start off yet again along the road to better understanding between Christians and Muslims. (Source-Chemchemi ya Ukweli)

Academic dialogue –

This is where exponents of different religious faiths meet and discuss the theological/philosophical basis of their traditions. Here genuine attempts are made to arrive at a common appreciation of the way in which each religious tradition has sought to explain and approach reality. These dialogues help in breaking down prejudices and misconceptions accumulated over centuries. They enrich, enlarge, challenge and correct the way some religions have understood and approached religious expression in their traditions.

Case study:

In the early 1980s, a Language Institute was established in al-Nahud in the diocese of el-Obeid to provide courses in Arabic language for members of the different missionary congregations arriving to work in the North of Sudan. Under the auspices of the *Sudan Catholic Bishops' Conference*, the institute also offered courses in some of the Sudanese tribal cultures and introductory courses in Islam were gradually introduced. The Institute eventually moved to Khartoum and became known as CLIK (*Catholic Language Institute*, Khartoum). The Institute also offered occasional talks and seminars on Sudanese tribal cultures and aspects of Islamic faith – the fast of Ramadan, Islamic Law, etc.

The Institute continues its work of language teaching and has, over the years, been a centre for Christian–Muslim encounter and dialogue. Talks and seminars have been organized at which Muslim and Christian speakers – lawyers and university professors, journalists and religious – have shared their faith while speaking of topics touching on: Human Rights, Women in Islam, Inter-religious Dialogue, the Ancient Christian Kingdoms of Sudan, etc.

A group calling itself the ‘*Friends of CLIK*’ meets regularly to discuss topics of interest in the field of Christian-Muslim Encounter and Dialogue. This group discusses a number of topical concerns affecting inter-religious relations: the difficulties posed by the specifically Sudanese situation – two different worlds facing each other; conditions for dialogue jeopardized by official education policies (primary and secondary school text books given Islamic cultural and religious settings) among other common topics of interest. (Source-ChemchemiYa Ukweli)

Dialogue of religious experience –

This is where different faiths share their experiences of prayer and contemplation – it is an invitation to encounter another faith directly at the spiritual level.

Brief history and current state

The current context of IRD

“When will religions become means of unity between people, and stop looking for additional reasons to kill each other?” (Julien Green, Diario, 1983).

Within the context of Chemchemi Ya Ukweli, IRD has a dramatic entry into its programs.

In 1998 a visiting American evangelist visited Nakuru for a meeting. In advertising for the meeting, posters were placed on the walls of a mosque in the town, an act that infuriated the Islamic community not only in the town but in the whole nation. Following, riots sprung from the Islamic

community in some parts of Kenya particularly Garissa and Wajir. In Wajir a catholic church was attacked and the cross on the building had one of its “arms” cut off.

The one armed cross still remains on the church in Wajir to date as a reminder of this unfortunate incident.

In 2000 there was a land dispute in Nairobi’s South B between hawkers and the Moslem community; with the hawkers being asked to vacate a piece of land that belonged to the South B Mosque. The hawkers responded in an arson attack on the mosque and burned down part of it.

After the Friday prayers on the Friday following, the “Our lady queen of peace catholic church” in Nairobi South B was razed to the ground. The Church has since been rebuilt on the same location.

This violence led to a conviction by all concerned to try and find the root cause to this apparent angry and reckless reactions and IRD was the obvious intervention. On 13th in the CYU boardroom, there was an interreligious dialogue meeting with brethren from the Islamic and others from the Catholic fraternity sitting down to address the issues.

Many of the citizens of the world believe that religions are violent by nature, and with strong reasons. Why, apparently religion is viewed as a van-



Participants in IRD meeting.

“A Common Word” has become the world’s leading interfaith dialogue initiative between Christians and Muslims. It is unprecedented in its scope and success in both the Christian and the Muslim world.

dal and one of the biggest triggers of conflict worldwide.

More wars have been fought in the name of religion than any other ideology. Religions have historically been

the rascal and cause of disorder, such as crusades and holy wars, which have all presented themselves as vehicles for intolerance and fanaticism.

Religions have in the end succeeded in attaching God to better serve the practitioners own selfish purposes. The opening verses of the Bible states that in the beginning God created man in His image, but looking back at history and how God has been dragged into religious conflict, it is almost as if man has ended up creating a god in his image.

When not at war with their neighbours, men and women have always made an effort to understand each other; not because understanding is a strategy for defense, but because for as long as there is dialogue, wars are delayed and even avoided. The history of interfaith dialogue is as ancient as the religions worldwide and recent History records many examples of interfaith initiatives and dialogue.

The Emperor Akbar the Great, for example, encouraged tolerance in Mughal India a diverse nation with people of various faith backgrounds, including Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, and Christianity. Muslim Spain is an additional historical example of great religious pluralism.

There have been several meetings referred to as a Parliament of the World’s Religions most notably the World’s Parliament of Religions of 1893, the first attempt to create a global dialogue of faiths. The event was celebrated by another conference on its centenary in 1993. This led to a new series of conferences under the official title “Parliament of the World’s Religions”.

1965 - The Roman Catholic Church issued the Vatican II document *Nostra Aetate*, instituting major policy changes in the Catholic Church’s policy towards non-Christian religions.



Participants in an IRD workshop training 2011.

The Bishop of Malindi in the Kenyan coast; the Most Reverend Francis Baldacchino, O.F.M.Cap., responding at a personal level to the call addressed by the Declaration *Nostra Aetate*, produced, during the 1990s, a series of booklets under the title *Come Closer*.

This quarterly publication sought to explain aspects of the faith and teachings of Islam – on the Hajj Pilgrimage, Islamic Law, health and healing, marriage, etc. – for a Christian readership. These booklets still act as a guide to better understanding, helping to allay fears and remove confusion

On coming out of many years of civil war, Kenya's western neighbor, Uganda, continues to enjoy the fruits of many years of work in the field of inter-religious encounter and dialogue, not only in relations between Christians and Muslims but also with followers of African Traditional Religions, a group still marginalized and neglected in so many African contexts. Here again, in Uganda, personal, individual initiatives taken by committed and enlightened visionaries laid the foundations for new endeavors in the work of implementing the teaching of *Nostra Aetate*

Worthy of mention is an initiative of a community of Little Brothers of the Gospel, active in animating an inter-faith group of some ten to fifteen members at parish level in a poor slum-suburb of Nairobi's Kangemi. Meetings are held and visits are arranged to church or mosque.

In August, 2006, in collaboration with Tangaza College, who gave generous funds to sponsor the event, Nairobi's Kenyatta University organized a three-day regional conference entitled: '*The Challenges facing Islam in the 21st Century*'. Speakers, including a number of eminent Muslim professors, came from Zanzibar and Tanzania, from Uganda and from Mombasa and Kenya's Coast Province. The conference sought to cover a broad spectrum of topics including the modern challenges faced by Muslims in the educational, political, social and economic fields. Included in the educational section were speakers from different Christian institutions of Higher Education where courses in Islamic Studies are offered, including St. Paul's Theological College in Limuru and Tangaza College in Nairobi.

In October 2007, another two day conference aiming to review the current state of Christian-Muslim relations in Eastern Africa was jointly organized by Tangaza College and Nijmegen University in the Netherlands.

September 11, 2001 - After the September 11 bombing of the twin towers in the USA, under the leadership of interfaith trailblazer, The Interfaith Centre of New York's mission became increasingly centered on providing assistance to immigrant and disenfranchised communities whose religious leaders were often the only source of knowledge for new immigrants about coping with a new life in an urban environment like New York City.

New programs were launched that responded to the needs of these constituents, combining practical information about establishing civic connections and information about other religions with insight about common social concerns. New programs included Religious Communities and

"O People of the Scripture! Come to a common word as between us and you: that we worship none but God" and the Biblical commandment to love God, and one's neighbor.

the Courts System (2003), Teacher Education in American Religious Diversity (2003), Mediation for Religious Leaders (2005), and Religious Diversity Training for Social Workers (2005).

A Common Word between Us and You is an open letter, dated 13 Octo-



ber 2007, from leaders of the Muslim faith to leaders of the Christian faith.

It calls for peace between Muslims and Christians and tries to work for common ground and understanding among both faiths, in line with the Qur'anic commandment to *“Say: ‘O People of the Scripture! Come to a common word as between us and you: that we worship none but God’* and the Biblical commandment to love God, and one's neighbor.

Since its release, “A Common Word” has become the world's leading interfaith dialogue initiative between Christians and Muslims. It is unprecedented in its scope and success in both the Christian and the Muslim world. The success of the initiative was acknowledged in its being awarded the “Eugen Biser Award” in 2008. That year saw “A Common Word” also receive the “Building Bridges Award” from the UK's Association of Muslim Social Scientists.

The letter is signed by 138 prominent Muslim personalities including academics, politicians, writers and muftis.

July 2008 - A historic interfaith dialogue conference was initiated by King

Abdullah of Saudi Arabia to solve world problems through concord instead of conflict. The conference was attended by religious leaders of different faiths such as Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Taoism and was hosted by King Juan Carlos of Spain in Madrid.

The Dalai Lama

The Dalai Lama met with Pope Paul VI at the Vatican in 1973. He met with Pope John Paul II in 1980 and also later in 1982, 1986, 1988, 1990, and 2003. In 1990, he met in Dharamsala with a delegation of Jewish teachers for an extensive interfaith dialogue. He has since visited Israel three times and met during 2006 with the Chief Rabbi of Israel. In 2006, he met privately with Pope Benedict XVI. He has met with the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Robert Runcie, and other leaders of the Anglican Church in London, Gordon B. Hinckley, President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), as well as senior Eastern Orthodox Church, Muslim, Hindu, Jewish, and Sikh officials. The Dalai Lama is also currently a member of the Board of World Religious Leaders as part of The Elijah Interfaith Institute and participated in the Third Meeting of the Board of World Religious Leaders in Amritsar, India, on 26 November 2007 to discuss the topic of Love and Forgiveness.

On 6 January 2009, at Gujarat's Mahuva, the Dalai Lama inaugurated an interfaith "World Religions-Dialogue and Symphony" conference convened by Hindu preacher Morari Bapu. This conference explored "ways and means to deal with the discord among major religions", according to Morari Bapu. He has stated that modern scientific findings should take precedence where appropriate over disproven religious superstition.

On 12 May 2010, in Bloomington, Indiana (USA) the Dalai Lama, joined by a panel of selected scholars, officially launched the Common Ground Project which he and HRH Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad of Jordan had planned over the course of several years of personal conversations. The project is based on the book Common Ground between Islam and Buddhism. -source Wikipedia

Locally, the national steering committee for interreligious dialogue was constituted on in February 2011. It has representation from Hindu, Baha'i Faith, Islam and Christianity. The committee has up to date organized an interreligious dialogue conference on 23rd of August 2011 in Nairobi, which brought together the various religious organizations. The meeting was addressed by the representatives of the various faiths including; Hasaan Omar form KNHCR, Mr. Michael Hasenau from the German Embassy, Ms Joy Mboya, a representative of the Baha'i Faith, Ms Shamsia Ramathan, Oliver Kisaka from National Christian Council of Churches and Mr. Muljibhai Pindolia from the Hindu Faith. One of the outcomes of the conference is the production of this manual.

What is the importance of inter religious dialogue?

Interreligious dialogue increases the understanding of the beliefs and practices of other religions. This enhanced understanding can lead to a more peaceable coexistence in the pluralistic culture of the 21st century.

Through sustainable and respectful relationships based on dialogue and engagement, conflicts resulting from or exacerbated by fear, disrespect



IRD meeting during the Kisumu Peace Festival in August 2011.

...together they begin to explore new areas of reality, of meaning, of truth, of which neither had even been aware before

and misunderstanding between communities are less likely to occur, and, when they do, are less likely to devolve into violence.

As people of different religious communities encounter each other in neighborhoods where they live, in mutual service, in schools, in government, and in civic activities, the foundations established through dialogue enables and empowers these people to know the areas in which mutual activity can ease their living and working together in society, as well as to know in advance the areas in which religious differences can make mutual undertakings difficult.

Because interreligious dialogue will inevitably bring to the surface the differences between religions, the discussants are forced to examine their own beliefs in order to support their stated positions. This examination will ultimately increase self-understanding.

Finally, with the focus of IRD being solely on values rather than dogmatic discourses, it increases the ability to love one's neighbors and enhance the ability to see that each person as a moral equal.

Promotion of unity in diversity

There are many common challenges such as conflicts, immorality, violence etc. facing society today. Finding a common basis for addressing these challenges while respecting the differences that exist between religious communities is a way to ensure that joint efforts are made to engage meaningfully for the benefit of all. The promotion of unity in diversity does not aim to standardize society, but rather, it is trying to find the values in peoples' /communities' culture and identity and promote respect in a rapidly growing global village.

Communities that previously did not have to live and work together in close relational proximity are now required to, due to the dynamics that come with globalization and population explosion.

This scenario creates a real need to challenge the different “Faiths” to re-think past prejudices, including and looking beyond the area of spirituality.

In response, IRD should be prepared to move participants beyond superficial levels of engagement where a series of token speeches are offered while the speakers are careful to avoid offending anyone. The outcome of this approach is always little or no conversation between the discussants.

The ideal situation is to move into a more profound interaction in which participants are encouraged to honestly reflect on and struggle together over potentially sensitive and provocative issues.

At this level of discussion, participants can not only tackle the common views shared between the traditions of their different faith communities, but also the different positions that have been reached through ethical and theological discussions.



Kisumu Peace Festival Celebrating Diversity in Unity.

Real personal and communal transformation will take place when participants are challenged to observe how their behavior is/is not living up to their professed ideals,

Exclusive and/or competing truth claims are addressed and understood. At this level, participants come to understand not only other faiths, but their own more intimately.

and the effect of their actions on others, which may sometimes differ from their intentions. Exclusive and/or competing truth claims are addressed and understood. At this level, participants come to understand not only other faiths, but their own more intimately.

This approach to dialogue involves tactics, manoeuvres and strategic advances but should however, not be purely a negotiation; with the parties involved approaching discussions from an adversarial position, representing solely the interests of their side and carrying an expectation that there is a finite pie of gaining ground. Rather it should be ethical and value based, where each side gradually sees possibility of gain in losing previously held misconceptions and biases.

As “faith practitioners” unlearn previous misinformation about each other and begin to know each other as they truly are, they are exposed values in the other’s tradition that they can identify with and begin to appreciate them, as this also validates their own tradition and value systems. Consequently, together they begin to explore new areas of reality, of meaning, of truth, of which neither had even been aware of before.

Promotion of peace

Conflict is a fact of life. Every part of our world seems to be torn apart by conflict and violence, and more so in Africa, where every aspect of social life is caught up in conflict and violence at social, political and religious levels among other areas of daily living. As stated earlier, history seems to point to the fact that conflicts between religions has been one of the major causes of violence, although more often than not, through the misuse of

religion for other, political, ends.

Despite the best efforts of religious leaders to correct this position and to make their contribution to world peace, it is clear to any observer that, they alone cannot produce peace between different peoples on behalf of everyone else. It has to be perceived as the task of every single one of us – whether Baha'i Faith, Christian, Muslim, or Hindu, to actively seek out this peace.

One of the main messages to be found in world religions, regardless of doctrinal persuasion is the teachings about peace and justice as core pillars of faith and the practice of peaceful coexistence and interaction with one's neighbours and fellow citizens. IRD has an important role to play here because it is through face-to-face dialogue that conflict and misunderstanding is reduced.

While it is not expected that all tensions and differences will be eliminated; through an attitude of openness and respect which is engendered by such dialogue we can find solutions to these tensions which are creative, informed and peaceful. Rather than being a threat to religious authenticity therefore, IRD helps to fulfill this core instruction common to all faith traditions

Getting knowledge and developing skills

If the indifference in our communities is to be tackled, it must be through combating ignorance. The more you know about others the more you are inclined to care about them. It is prudent and particularly important for religious leaders, as respected opinion shapers within our societies, to increase both their knowledge



Sikh leader Kisumu 2011.

of others and the skills involved in communicating this knowledge. IRD meets both these goals, and is therefore indispensable for combating indifference in the search for peace and respect. Interestingly, each religion invites its believers to gain wisdom, to seek for the truth and to look at the world. Building on this then, IRD leads to two kinds of knowledge:

- Knowledge about your own identity, religion and culture;
- Knowledge about others.

Both aspects are crucial when engaging in IRD as both are steps towards deeper respect, understanding, unity and peace.

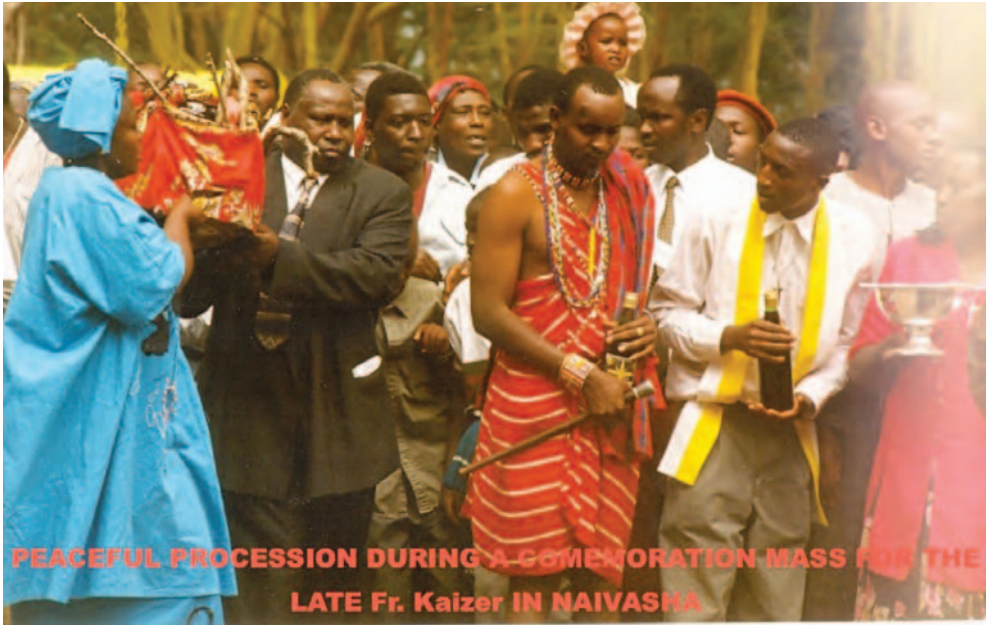
First of all you gain knowledge of your own identity through meeting people with different cultural and religious belief and value systems, as the African proverb goes, “your mother is always the best cook until you leave home and get to sample other cooks.” The diversity provided in this kind of dialogue provides you the opportunity to formulate who you are and reflect on what is valuable and important to you as a person of faith.

Secondly you gain knowledge of others. The safest way to gain objective knowledge is through ongoing conversation with “the other”. There is always the sense of excitement that comes from a conversation with a person you have never met and known before. The skills gained by participating in dialogue, such as listening, empathy, communication, sensitivity to difference and inclusion of others, are also important skills, and to develop them in the delicate and fulfilling environment of IRD will be of huge benefit to the participants.

Mutual spiritual enrichment

It is always important to remember that IRD is not about the fusion of religions. It always be stressed upfront that whatever common aims and principles they may share, understanding and dialogue should not seek to undermine the fundamental distinctiveness of each religion.

*Your mother is always the best
cook until you leave home and get
to sample other cooks*



An important goal of IRD is spiritual enrichment through knowing who we are and what we believe in. Through exercising objectivity and our ability to look at our own faith critically and others in an open and respectful manner, we are able to gain a balanced view and maturity in our own faith.

This does not mean that followers of one religion cannot learn from or be inspired by the spirituality, practices or teaching of others. There are several aspects of mutual spiritual enrichment that are found in interreligious dialogue. These often include:

- Intensity and character of spiritual life
- Prayer life
- Ethics and morality
- Social norms
- Practical life

Apologetics and Interreligious Dialogue

Just as IRD is not about the fusion of religions, it is not debate either. This does not negate the crucial provision for addressing stereotypes and conflicting or erroneous religious claims. Religious communities should have leaders and apologists responsible for defining what they consider orthodox doctrine and practice. These doctrines will in most cases contradict the doctrines held by other religious communities.

All the world's religions are rooted in active nonviolence. Islam means peace. Judaism upholds the vision of shalom, where people beat swords into plowshares and study war no more. Gandhi exemplified Hinduism as the spiritual life of active nonviolence. Buddhism calls for compassion toward all living beings. Even Christianity requires active and creative nonviolence.

Clearly a one day/week IDR workshop may not necessarily be the ideal platform to engage fully in arguing and thrashing out doctrinal positions and contradictions. When the opportunity presents itself however, the facilitator may need to consider allowing the participants to make and clarify doctrinal claims, while contemplating the doctrinal claims of others, and to respectfully defend their own doctrinal claims when criticized.

Giving a hearing to the position of the dialogical apologist insulates the dialogue against the danger of syncretism. By allowing open and honest statement of doctrinal orthodoxy among participants, real interreligious dialogue is enhanced and the clarification of beliefs and practices takes place, and thus generating greater understanding of the similarities and differences between religions.

The caution is that accusations should be avoided and such criticism and defense be done in a respectful, non-aggressive manner, without enforcing dogmatic positions upon the other participants.



Moslem leader giving his view an-IRD meeting.

Interreligious Dialogue in Islam

The terrorist attacks of September 11 in the US revived such prejudices of Islam as a religion that promotes violence and of Muslims as an inherently militant and irrational people. The actions of the terrorist have damaged the reputation and the future of Muslims worldwide have had to endure discrimination

and even acts of violence perpetrated by fringe minority groups.

In Kenya, the Al Shabaab attacks that included a grenade attack in Garissa on an Evangelical Church (East African Pentecostal Church) on the 15th Dec 2011 among other attacks in North Eastern and the Coastal regions have positioned Islam to be portrayed as a religion of violent people who are close-minded and unwilling to engage in discussion with people of other faiths.

The Qur'an however, offers clear guidelines and encouragement for Muslims to engage with, and live peaceably with people of other faiths. For example, The Qur'an expressly instructs Muslims to defend all houses of worship, even those of other faiths:

“Did not Allah check one set of people by means of another, there would surely have been pulled down monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques, in which the name of Allah is commemorated in abundant measure” (Qur'an 22:40).

The Qur'an specifically encourages Muslims to come to the defense of those who have been expelled from their homes, are oppressed and tortured, or are weak; regardless of their religion.

“Why should you not fight in the cause of Allah and of those who, being weak, are ill-treated and oppressed? Men, women, and children whose cry is, ‘Our Lord! Rescue us from this town, whose people are oppressors! Raise for us from You one who will protect, and raise for us from You one who will help!’ ”(Qur’an 4:75).

On peaceful co-existence that encourages Dialogue, the instructions and approach to the Islamic faithful are clearly given;

“... Whenever you speak, speak justly, even if a near relative is concerned; and fulfil the covenant of God. Thus does He command you, that you may remember.”

Speak Gently

At all times, Muslims are instructed to show the best of manners and wisdom when speaking of faith to others. Muslims are asked in the Qur’an to listen carefully, and share opinions with careful thought and patience.

“Invite (all) to the Way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious: for thy Lord knoweth best, who have strayed from His Path, and who receive guidance.”(Qur’an 16:125)

“And do not argue with the followers of the Book except by what is best, save with those of them who act unjustly, and say: We believe in that which has been revealed to us and revealed to you, and our God and your God is One, and to Him do we submit.”(Qur’an 29:46)

“... Whenever you speak, speak justly, even if a near relative is concerned; and fulfil the covenant of God. Thus does He command you, that you may remember.”(Qur’an 6:152)

A recognition that God is the One to Guide

Muslims are encouraged not to feel discouraged if people seem unconvinced by their beliefs, and are unwilling to share their faith, and warns against proselytism. The Qur’an describes that God Alone is the One to guide people’s hearts.

“Let there be no compulsion in religion: Truth stands out clear from Error: whoever rejects evil and believes in Allah hath grasped the most trustworthy hand-hold, that never breaks. And Allah heareth and knoweth all things.”(Qur’an 2:256)

“If your Lord had so willed, He could have made mankind one people: but they will not cease to dispute.”(Qur’an 11:118)

“And do thou be patient, for thy patience is but from Allah; nor grieve over them: and distress not thyself because of their plots. For Allah is with those who restrain themselves, and those who do good.”(Qur’an 16:127-128)

Part Kindly From Those Who Ridicule Faith

When faced by someone who persistently ridicules or mocks the Islamic faith, and is obviously unwilling to listen to your point of view, the instruction is to quietly withdraw from the situation, without becoming angry or engaging in arguments.

“He has already revealed to you in the Scripture, that when you hear the signs of Allah held in defiance and ridicule, you are not to sit with them unless they turn to a different theme. If you did, you would be like them...”(Qur’an 4:140)

“Tell those who believe, to forgive those who do not look forward to the Days of Allah: It is for Him to recompense (for good or ill) each people according to what they have earned.”(Qur’an 45:14)

A Christian Biblical Basis for Interreligious Dialogue

All the world’s religions are rooted in active nonviolence. Islam means peace. Judaism upholds the vision of shalom, where people beat swords into plowshares and study war no more. Gandhi exemplified Hinduism as the spiritual life of active nonviolence. Buddhism calls for compassion toward all living beings.

Gandhi said that Jesus was the most active practitioner of nonviolence in the history of the world, and the only people who do not know Jesus was nonviolent are Christians. Jesus practiced creative, public nonviolence. He

called us to love our neighbors, show compassion toward everyone, seek justice for the poor, forgive those who hurt us, put down the sword, take up the cross in the struggle for justice, and lay down our lives in love for humanity. At the climax of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew Chapters 5-7), he spoke the most significant, revolutionary words ever uttered. "You have heard it said, 'Love your countrymen and hate your enemy,' but I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you that you may be children of your heavenly God, for God makes the sun rise on the bad and the good, and the causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust. Be compassionate as God is compassionate."(Mt. 5:43-48)

Jesus is recorded to have questioned the religious teachers on various points, amazing them in turn with his responses to their questions. While this is an example of interfaith rather than interreligious dialogue, it is a discussion that almost certainly involved insights from Jesus that would have been understood by the teachers as transcending the common boundaries of contemporary Judaism.

St. Paul's discourse on Mars Hill in Athens (Acts of the Apostles chapter 17) exhibits a similar willingness to engage in IRD. Rather than avoid-



ing any contact with the idolatrous practices of the Athenians, St. Paul closely observed them and then used these practices as the springboard for presenting his beliefs: he debated with the Jews and the “devout” by merely “beholding” the practices of the people outside his religious community. The implication here is that he took time to consider and ponder over their practice of worship. St. Paul examined the religions of the Athenians to determine their spiritual state and to have discussions in a way that would be most comprehensible to them. The knowledge used by St. Paul could only be obtained through direct interaction with the practitioners of the Athenian philosophies and religions.

St. Paul also shows that Christians can acknowledge truth in other religions without accepting the entirety of the religion as true. His affirmative quotation from the Cretan poet Epimenides (whom he again quotes in Titus 1:12) is an example of approvingly noting a truth in the beliefs of the Athenians.

Through the clarified understanding of other religions that results from interreligious dialogue, St. Paul is able to express his beliefs so that they will be correctly understood by people in other religions and cultures. This can only result from, to use the old cliché, walking in the shoes of others:

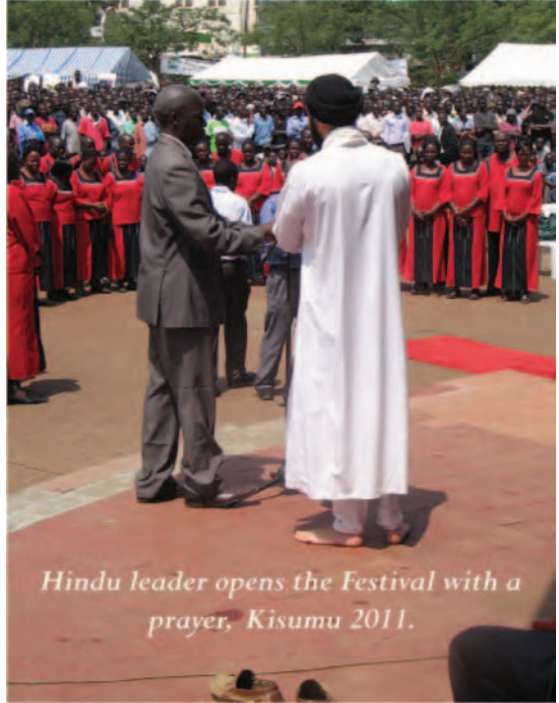
For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law. To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. 1 Corinthians 9:19-22

From a Christian perspective, dialogue should be viewed as a way for understanding how non-Christians perceive Christianity.

*dialogue should be viewed
as a way for understanding
how non-Christians perceive
Christianity.*

The Hindu position on dialogue

Quoting from the Hindu scripture and looking at IRD from this perspective, human beings' knowledge about God is relative. Therefore, no one cannot claim have the only one truth (absolute truth). All faith and all path are regarded as equally valid. None is superior; none is inferior to the other. *Like blind people touching an elephant, each one can touch one part of the elephant, and others touch another part. So, how we can claim that we have absolute and comprehensive description about elephant, if we just touch one part of elephant.*



Hindu leader opens the Festival with a prayer, Kisumu 2011.

In addition, in one of Hindu Scripture Bhagavad-Gita Gee-ta, it mentions *Yet yatha mam prapadyante/Tanis tathai va bhajamy aham/ mama varta nuvartante/ manusyah partha, sarvasah*, which means that “by whichever method one worships me, I approach them and fulfill their wishes through that very method. Know that people approach Me from various path”.

Those two scriptures, Bhagavad-Gita and Rigveda, show that Hinduism see that the difference of God is naming of One-God. In this sense, although Muslim, Christian, Jew, Buddha have different names of God, all are same. Therefore, the purpose missionary of Hinduism is regarded as an effort to believe in Hinduism. A Missionary in Hinduism just wants to spread goodness, not to get many followers of Hinduism, with an outlook

about other religions that pushes the understanding that no one religion is superior over all others; all are called to learn from each other.

The theological and Historical outlook of Hinduism hinges upon responding to other beliefs and religions, especially concerning the concept of God. There are several similarities between Hinduism and indigenous belief; For instance, Hinduism worships Brahman and various gods, while indigenous people worship ancestor spirit, and the leader of Hinduism ceremony is Brahmins while the leader ceremony of indigenous people is *dukun* (shaman). Therefore, the coming of Hinduism in Indonesia does not muzzle indigenous belief, but rather uses what the locals believe to create a platform for dialogue.

Inner Dialogue.

This model emphasizes the spirituality aspect rather than comparative religion or theology. The purpose of this dialogue is to try to experience in one's own depth the meeting of Christian and Hindu spirituality. An encounter of Christian and Hindu spirituality would take part in the inner man, namely his spirituality. The Christian, for instance, is asked to read the Upanishads to find Christ in them in a way analogous to that in which Christ found himself in the Old Testament. The most important event at the meeting is communication, which happens in silent meditation.

Sustained dialogue.

This dialogue involves contact between Hindus from all levels with people from different denominations. It is less systematized, less theological and personally much more challenging. Christians are invited to attend many events held by Hindus to talk and discuss several issues, such as ways of salvation, Christian Yoga, Sufism, etc. By doing this kind of dialogue there is presented an opportunity to compare and find contrast and similarity between Hinduism, Islam and Christianity. It may not be so easy to carry this form of dialogue, because of the different sectoral schools of thought in religious organizations, which differ on some theological issues.

Organized dialogue.

This dialogue is more formal than two previous models of dialogue. For instance, World Fellowship of Friends met a number of representative of other world religions who are willing to participate in a one-week seminar. This model of dialogue has been done many times not only in India but also in Indonesia as a formal meeting. This approach may not really touch the real condition of the society, but it may be useful to discuss and formulate ways to solve social problems.

Baha'i Faith

The Unity of Religion is a core teaching in the Baha'i Faith that states that there is a fundamental unity of many of the world's religions. The principle states that the teachings of the major religions are part of a single plan directed from the same God. It is one of the core teachings of the Baha'i Faith, alongside the unity of God, and the unity of humanity.

The Baha'i Faith teachings state that there is but one religion which is progressively revealed by God, through prophets/messengers, to mankind as humanity matures and its capacity to understand also grows. The outward differences in the religions, the Baha'i Faith writings state, are due to the exigencies of the time and place the religion was revealed.

The Baha'i Faith writings state that the essential nature of the messengers is twofold: they are at once human and divine. They are divine in that they all come from the same God and expound His teachings, and thus they can be seen in the same light, but at the same times they are separate individuals known by a different name, who fulfills a definite mission, and is entrusted with a particular revelation.

Bahá'u'lláh, the founder of the Baha'i Faith, claimed to be the most recent, but not the last, in a series of divine educators which include Jesus, Buddha, Muhammad, and others.

Benefits of IRD

Our discussion of interreligious dialogue has been, to this point, somewhat distant from the life of the average faith practitioner. Because formal interreligious dialogue is held by scholars and other authoritative religious representatives, most people have little involvement in the process. Why, then, should the average person care about dialogue?

Interreligious dialogue increases the understanding a believer has of the beliefs and practices of the other. This enhanced understanding can lead to a more peaceable coexistence in the pluralistic culture of 21st century. As people of different religious communities encounter each other in mutual service in schools, in government, and in civic activities, the foundations established through dialogue will enable these people to know the areas in which mutual activity can enhance society (as well as to know in advance the areas in which religious differences can make mutual undertakings difficult).



*Brahma Kumaris is a spiritual movement from India.
Meditation during IRD Conference Nairobi 2011.*

As stated above, dialogue enhances the efficacy of living in a modern world that has no room left for religious intolerance. The clarified understanding of other religions will be published in books and articles about the religions, many of which will be read religious leaders, as well as transmitted to average believers of whichever religion. These people will then be able to represent their value systems in a way that most effectively addresses the needs and thinking of people in other religions.

Interreligious dialogue also brings believers and practitioners to better understand their own faith. Because the focus of IRD touches on the differences between religions, they are forced to examine their own beliefs in order to support these positions. This examination will increase the self-understanding, helping them to differentiate between the truth and the cultural lenses through which people too frequently interpret each other's religions.

IRD enhances apologetics and discernment. By better understanding the beliefs and practices of other religions, you are able to understand how the uniqueness of your own religion. This enables Christians to both identify and contextualize the teachings of other religions, and to present a reason for why Christians believe differently.

Finally, interreligious dialogue increases our ability to love our neighbors. Dialogue will enhance our ability to see that each person is our moral Relations developed through IRD will improve as clarified understanding of one's own faith and lives of neighbors erases misconceptions about other religions.

“In situations where hostility is not present, where the mutual exclusions of truth are assumed, where commitment is allowed, and where agreement is not the minimal expectation (which I assume eliminates a great deal of what passes for interreligious dialogue today), interreligious dialogue is not just allowed, but I would suggest the world situation demands it.”- Terry Muck

Conceptual challenges and obstacles to interreligious dialogue

The logical value of IRD is clear, but there are often fears and obstacles that get in the way of genuine, open and respectful dialogue. It is therefore important to recognize these common problems and look for possible ways to overcome them. At the same time it must be recognized that in some cases it may not be possible to change people's minds on these issues, and while education and trust-building are important and fruitful tools, occasionally you may find that some people are simply not willing to engage in dialogue, and forcing them to may be an exercise in futility or even outright counter-productive. Some of these obstacles are listed here.

'I have nothing to learn!'

Some people may claim that their religion gives them the whole truth and there is nothing to gain from dialogue with those of other traditions. This is perhaps the most difficult obstacle to overcome because those holding this view will be least likely to change. It is obvious that forcing such people into dialogue would most likely be counter-productive, but again themes such as the incompleteness of human knowledge, the positive teachings on religious plurality, shared roots of religious identity e.g. the shared root of the Abraham Faiths (Judaism, Christianity and Islam), could prove gently persuasive.

Lack of understanding of own and other religions

This challenge borrows and is largely rooted in the first challenge, where conflict and misunderstandings are founded on reciprocal ignorance. Because the people are badly informed or educated on religious topics, they often become victims of sensationalization and media's interpretations of information.



Ignorance often leads to social, cultural and political conflicts.

Rather than leave religious education to the scholars, the value of the wider public, educating themselves about concepts present in different religious traditions and making an effort to approach their holy scriptures, cannot be overstated. Inter-religious education is an invaluable tool in developing inter-religious understanding.

Fear of losing identity

A common fear which prevents some people from engaging with IRD is the fear of losing their religious identity. There is always an unfounded feeling that mixing with people of different beliefs will water down their own, or harbor unreasonable suspicion of the motives of people inviting them to dialogue. They might worry that what is sought by the dialoguing partners is some kind of conversion or assimilation to the other group.

It is more likely for minority groups to behave in this defensive manner, who see themselves as under threat and wish to preserve their identity. In situations like this it is not only the responsibility of those feeling threatened to become more 'open' to dialogue. The dialoguing partners should also make efforts to ensure that their statements are free of attempts to convert the other and unqualified unification, and that they are fully respectful of the traditions and distinctiveness of other religions.

Prejudice and stereotypes

Religious prejudices and stereotypes are often deeply rooted in our societies, and pose a serious danger to the development of IRD. Faith-based organizations can take positive steps to raise awareness of and help to deconstruct damaging stereotypes which lead to religious prejudice.

Causes of stereotypes

There are many causes of stereotyping, which includes but is not limited to:

- Ignorance
- Fear of others
- Intellectual laziness: simplification, generalization, and reductionism
- Fear of losing identity
- The influence of persistent historical images and interpretations
- Media manipulation and over-simplification
- The exploitation of religion for political ends
- Social and economic exclusion.

Religious prejudices

With the increase of terrorist attacks globally in the recent years, Muslim communities have experienced an increasingly hostile environment towards them, characterized by suspicion. These prejudices have increased even more since the activities of Al-Qaeda came to global attention in 2001, but were certainly in evidence previously and can be traced back even further.

In Kenya, the terrorist attacks by the Al Shabaab have affected both Muslim and non Muslim, yet the blame still falls upon the Islamic community to the extent that all people of Somali origin are branded as Al Shabaab. (From interview with Father Nicolas of the Garissa Diocese). These prejudices have included not only fear, suspicion and discrimination but also social exclusion.

Prejudice and discrimination against Christians has not been nearly as rampant in Africa, mainly due to the official Church-State relationships over the past centuries. However, Christians in Northern Nigeria have faced violent attacks and persecution from Muslim extremists in the recent past

Overcoming stereotypes

To overcome the stereotypes about others which can lead to religious prejudice it is wise to consider the following:

- Personal contact is crucial – treat all people as individuals
- Seek information from different sources, cross-checking information and using critical enquiry
- Recognize that people are defined not only by their religion but by other characteristics such as age, sex, gender, ethnicity, political, cultural and economic circumstances
- Increase communication between different religions, communities and individuals
- Encourage minorities to be open to contact with others
- Do not allow dominant groups to swallow the identity of minorities
- Be balanced, reasonable and fair
- Distinguish between the ideas and teaching of a religion and the practice of its followers
- Do not judge people on first impressions or appearances
- Do not form your ideas about others only from the media.

Disagreement over the role of religion in society

Different religions often have different ways of seeing their involvement in society. These different approaches to the social role of religion can, if not handled properly, prove problematic to IRD. They need to be approached in an informed way, with sensitivity and caution. Such sensitive areas may include:

- The involvement of religion in politics.
- Attitudes of religion to gender roles.
- Attitudes of religion to the use of physical force.

- The role of religion in education.

IRD will be most constructive when a distinction is made between cultural practice and religious duty, and at the same time maintaining respect, which ultimately reveals the wisdom that often lies behind practices with which we are not familiar.

Perceived lack of expertise

Another obstacle to IRD is the idea that it is an activity only for experts, to be done in formal settings, and that those with less experience such; as lay leaders within religious organizations, women and youth are not qualified or able to take part in it. Organizations that are not directly tied to a specific religious organization (*e.g. CBO's youth/women groups etc) don't attend, or are normally left out of the invitations sent out for IRD platforms, yet through their more frequent contact with people of different faiths, have the greatest potential to practice, and enjoy to the fullest the benefits of IRD.

There may be a reluctance to engage with people of other religions until one feels that they have fully 'mastered' their own, or a reliance on those in leadership positions to take part in dialogue on behalf of their followers. This attitude needs to be resisted and countered as it is not only factually incorrect, but may have dangerous consequences. The more IRD is seen as something for a group of experts, the more it is removed from the everyday lives and activities of ordinary people. If IRD is to be presented as a force able to address the challenges of society (like politics, development, the constitution, devolved government, etc.), it must involve participation from people most affected by them.

Empowering people who might otherwise not consider themselves able to take part in dialogue is a key challenge addressed by this manual. It is cru-



cial to allow people to speak for themselves and give them the courage to represent their own religious tradition, while also acknowledging that they as individuals can never represent the totality of a religion's views.

Participants should also be reassured that they are not expected to know everything, and it is acceptable to not have the answer to every question - all of our knowledge remains incomplete, and sometimes even the wisest religious leaders will recognize this.

Finally, it is impossible to deny the reality of grassroots inter-religious encounter. Modern society sees people of many traditions living side by side, and despite some tendencies towards isolation and separation, there are also many instances of people engaging with and learning from each other, through the dialogue of daily life and shared social and economic project.

SECTION 2: THEMATIC AND CONCEPTUAL PRINCIPLES OF IRD

THEMATIC AND CONCEPTUAL PRINCIPLES OF IRD

Introduction

All of the world's religions have been grappling with conflict, injustice and violence for millennia. Not surprisingly, they have all sought to introduce practices and values that can reduce these negative social dynamics. Affirmed in the teachings of the many world religions, is a provision for compassionate engagement with those of other communities, which can be enhanced to bring all of us to the place of “respecting the otherness of others” and accepting the given uniqueness endowed to each one of us.

IRD in and by itself may not end conflict and create universal justice. However, it is a powerful tool for relationship-building and for strengthening pro-social norms as a means to amplify advocacy and activism. It can also be a powerful ally for nurturing cultural diversity and pluralism, necessary components for securing human rights.

This thematic session is a template for dialogue and cooperative work. It targets to give guidelines for conversations between either of the four world religions we have been looking at: Christian, Hindu, Baha'i Faith and Islam, and can also be used to facilitate a dialogue meeting for all of them.

It is an eight-session modular program created to serve as a foundation for the different religious organizations to engage in dialogue. The goal is both profound and simple: to foster mutual understanding and appreciation between the different religions, and to dispel misunderstanding.

It is aimed at helping participants understand how the different faiths are actively lived – to see how beliefs, values, hopes, and doubts shape our individual and communal lives.

It is the writers' hope that many congregations will be eager to carry their relationships with each other beyond a single structured event, as the guide provides participants with the opportunity to dialogue about important modern-day issues.

Each session attempts to make use of religious texts, popular culture, and interactive activities to explore the topics in a way that would be comfortable to all the participants.

By focusing on shared values and a commitment to making the world a better place, participants will gain a new understanding of both their own and one another's religious tradition.

SECTION OVERVIEW

This section borrows from and intends to explore in an applicable manner the theologian Hans Küng's work to promote world peace by seeking to establish peace between the world's major religions.

Peace among religions must start with an exploration of the common ground that already exists between the religions in matters of ethics: the establishment of a Global Ethic.

Küng's argument for the need and the nature of a global ethic is required as the minimal starting point of peaceful coexistence between cultures in an age of global awareness will be explored.

There will be an effort by the writers towards a practical application of some of the principles issued from the Declaration Toward a Global Ethic that was passed by the Parliament of World Religions in September of 1993 based on Küng's work.

Implications for the different faiths' mutual understanding and dialogue will be examined and as with the rest of the manual, the section intendeds to help Christians, Baha'i Faith, Moslems and Hindu to forge relationships based on open communication about social and religious issues.

Working at the congregational as opposed to the clergy level, we will begin to understand one another better and build a sense of trust among community members.

Stated in Section 1, which is the introductory part of this manual, and

quoting Leonard Swidler, Professor of Catholic Thought and Inter-Religious Dialogue at Temple University, interfaith dialogue operates in three areas: ‘the practical, where we collaborate to help humanity; the depth or “spiritual” dimension, where we attempt to experience the partner’s religion or ideology “from within”; and the cognitive, where we seek understanding of the truth’. (Engaging across divides: interfaith dialogue for peace and justice-Susan Hayward)

There is therefore an expectation of an increased respect for one another’s traditions and gained greater insight into each one’s own beliefs as well. To accomplish this, the intention is to focus on the three stated central concerns;

- who we are,
- what we think,
- and how we act

There will also be an attempt to delve deeper into specific, contemporary issues to further our understanding of one another. Highlighted within the eight sessions of this manual will be some of the social justice issues of concern in our society today.

Social justice values are based in our religious texts and traditions. While we often think about social issues in a secular context, the concept of formulating the ideas within a religious framework based on religious texts may enable us to gain a broader understanding of the subject matter and how our social and political views can be informed within the context of our religious beliefs.

The social justice issues of today are not simply passing concerns but have engaged religious thinkers throughout history, especially those with strong convictions to repair the world. Learning what religious scholars of the past believed about such issues can shed light upon and further strengthen our commitment to working for these causes.

As people of faith, the participants are invited to study these traditions together, finding common points of connection and ways to work together.

In this respect, the sessions may also challenge them to go beyond dialogue to act on their social justice values by engaging ongoing social action projects.

Jointly shared initiatives will benefit the larger community and the dialogue participants.

While we may get to see that we have much in common in our shared texts and many of our social values, there are also issues on which we are obviously divided. Such division should not be a negative component in relationships between the different faiths, but should rather provide the space to understand one another's traditions and respect one another religious convictions.

Participants' attitudes may also be divided on certain issues, and not necessarily along religious lines. The goal of this manual is not to come to the single truth of what either religion believes about a given issue, but rather to engage in a dialogue in which all opinions are heard and respected. There will likely be ambiguity in some of the issues discussed, but exploring this gray area allows for compelling dialogue and stronger comprehension of the issues.

It will be important in many of the sessions to draw clear distinctions of where the different faiths differ. While this sounds contradictory at first, by highlighting these differences we can come to a more comprehensive understanding of one another's religious tradition and of our own.

Failure to bring these differences to the forefront and exploring both areas of agreement and divergence may create a situation where participants continue to hold on to stereotypes and biases of one another based on their previous preconceived notions.

Important considerations:

It may be helpful to ask these questions at the beginning of each session:

- Would we expect Moslems and Hindus (for example) to come to different conclusions on this?

- How would we expect them to differ?”

Reflecting at the end of each session it may be helpful to close by asking:

- “How are our initial impressions different from our current understanding of the topic?
- Were we correct in our assumptions of one another’s (and our own) tradition?”

This section provides flexibility for participating congregations. Eight topics have been prepared that can be covered in either one or two sessions. If a certain topic seems more interesting to a group, they may be free to spread the material out over a period they feel comfortable to work with, allowing more time to discuss the issue.

Time schedules for each of these options will need to be agreed upon by the participants. Please note that whatever time-lines provided for in the manual are just suggestions; users are free to adjust the timing and format as desired; and a discussion on the time schedules with the participants is encouraged to enhance “ownership” of the program.

We suggest allotting an hour and a half if the facilitator chooses to do the topic in one session and one hour and fifteen minutes per session if you choose to do it in two.

You may want to launch and/or conclude the program with a separate session or extend the first and/or last sessions by 30 minutes.

An introductory conversation will help give participants an overview of the program covered and provide an opportunity to view the topics on which to focus. A concluding session will allow time to reflect on the experience as a whole and discuss next steps for the dialogue group.

While the presence of clergy is strongly encouraged, it is not an absolute necessity for the success of this dialogue since the sessions are designed to be led by lay facilitators. (Clergy, however, can be particularly helpful to participants as they wrestle with some of the more complex issues discussed in the sessions.)

The facilitator is responsible for ensuring that all participants have the opportunity to contribute and for keeping the discussion moving. The facilitator should feel free to allow more or less time for a section, according to group interest. Similarly, if there is insufficient time to discuss all of the topics or all the discussion questions in a session, the facilitator should feel free to skip topics or questions in order to give sufficient time to those that can be addressed effectively.

Before each session, facilitators should review the texts in order to run the session more effectively.

The conversations of the dialogue sessions may serve as an important foundation on which to base further dialogue.

If this program is the first time the group is working together or that individual participants have met one another, we encourage you to begin with a more general orientation session.

One possible framework for this meeting is to use the beginning of Session.

In this introduction (reprinted in the Appendix) participants explore their names and family histories, religious upbringing and practice and the role of study in their religious traditions.

NOTES ON USAGE

The writers have made use of the wide array of resources of Chemchemi Ya Ukweli among other sources. In preparing this manual, we have drawn upon the work done by CYU, different organizations and individuals who have made increasing interreligious understanding and social justice their life's work.

The facilitators and other users of the manual should keep in mind that due to copyright restrictions, these resources and notes are only to be used for educational purposes.

SOME PRINCIPLES FOR THE INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

(Adapted from Leonard Swidler: The Dialogue Decalogue, *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 20/1:1-4.)

1. Enter into dialogue so that *you can learn and grow; not to change the other.*
2. Be conscious of the need to allow people the space to enter the discussion. Some people are more sheepish about offering their thoughts, but will be encouraged to do so if more outspoken persons avoid dominating the exchange.
3. Be honest and sincere, even if that means revealing discomforts with your own tradition or that of the other. Assume that everyone else is being equally honest and sincere.
4. Everyone must be permitted to define his or her own religious experience and identity, and this must be respected by others.
5. Proselytizing or seeking to “convert” the conversation partner is not permitted in an interreligious dialogue setting. Participants should feel free to express their own faith traditions and beliefs, but not try to persuade others to assent to them.
6. Don’t feel that you are the spokesperson for your entire faith tradition or that you ought somehow to know everything there is to know about it. Admit any confusion or uncertainty you might have if a puzzling question arises.
7. Don’t assume in advance where points of agreement or disagreement will exist.



8. Everyone should be willing to be self-critical.
9. All should strive to experience the other's faith "from within" and be prepared to view themselves differently as a result of an "outside perspective."
10. Trust is a must.

It is the writers hope that through this encounter and conversation, Hindus, Baha'i Faith, Moslems and Christians might better learn to see each other as bearers of traditions worthy of study and understanding, to appreciate similarities and respect differences.

This new era of engagement and hope can help in the ongoing process of eclipsing centuries of enmity, but only if the real work is now done in the pews and in our homes.

SESSION 1

DIGNITY OF ALL MEN



150 minutes



Ice- Breaker



Introduction:

The trainer to introduce themselves-name- Special instructions specialists etc...



Session overview: The big picture:

The fundamental dignity of all human persons always has priority over other ends or means.

Reflections:



Reflections from Christian scripture about human dignity:



Reflections from Hindu scripture about human dignity:



Reflections from Baha'i Faith scripture about human dignity:

☾★ Reflections from Muslim scripture about human dignity:

○ Reflections of scripture from other world religion:

 DISCUSSION

A religious reaction to the issue of dignity/indignity in our society

Divide into four groups with representation from different religious groups.

- Each group discussing one of the texts provided
- Each group shares the main points with the larger group.

Joint commitment of the group to pursue dignity of all human beings.

 ACTIVITIES

 ROLE PLAY

Scenario 1:

P1 is seated on a bench reading the newspaper.

P 2 walks to person 1 and seats next on the bench.

P 2 asks P1 if he could read the first page of the paper.

P 1 does not answer

P 2 starts peeping as we struggle to read

P1 hits P2 on the head.

At this point, the facilitator may stop the scene.



DISCUSSION

Discuss the outcome of the role-play and the truth that came out within the perspectives.



SAMPLE GUIDING QUESTIONS (FACILITATOR MAY USE TO ASK PARTICIPANTS)

- What did you see?
- What did you hear?
- Does this affect us in our community?
- Was there evidence of religious bias in the responses by the participants?
- How can this conflict situation be transformed using the scripture?



SAMPLE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. According to the scriptures read, what is the difference between the importance placed on human dignity in the scriptures and the value actually placed on it by society?
2. Other than the obligation placed on us by the scriptures, what are the implications of this emphasis on how we relate with each other?
3. Do you think it is better to respect the dignity of one another willingly or unwillingly? Before being asked or after being asked?
4. Should it matter to us as long as our actions are not “hurting” some-

one?

5. Why do scripture place such high value on human dignity?
6. How are the different scriptures similar on the commitment to the respect of human dignity?
7. How can our joint commitment to the respect of human dignity lead to action?



ACTIVITY

Participants to create joint statement on commitment to respect of human dignity



ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES

Open your mouth for the mute, for the rights of all who are destitute. Open your mouth, judge righteously; defend the rights of the poor and needy. Proverbs₃₁:8-9 -(Christian)

“O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other (and not hate one another). Surely, the most honored of you in the sight of God is (he who) is the most righteous of you. And God has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things).” (Quran 49:13)-(Islam)

Know ye not why We created you all from the same dust? That no one should exalt himself over the other. Bahá'u'lláh, The Hidden Words (Baha'i Faith)

All humans are equal as God's creation but are not the same; therefore, all should give and receive according to their own nature. These groups uphold the idea of following one's own nature (*svadharma*) as advocated in the *Bhagavad-Gita*.⁴

SESSION 2

EVERY HUMAN BEING MUST BE TREATED HUMANELY

Time 150 Minutes

Ice breaker:

The group is divided into pairs consisting people who do not know each other well, preferably from a different religion from their own. They interview each other for about 5 minutes each, asking spontaneous questions and recording the information. At the end of the interview they are each asked to draw a symbol for their partner. When each person has been interviewed, a presentation in plenary takes place. The participants stand in pairs in front of the entire group and present each other, describing what they have learnt about their partner and why they chose that particular symbol. The presentations should not last longer than 3 minutes per person, and if there is room, the drawings can be hanged for the duration of the workshop. If the group already knows each other from before, the facilitator can ask them to find out aspects such as hobbies, family details, secrets, vision for the future, etc. . .

Session overview: The big picture

The fundamental dignity of all human persons always has priority over other ends or means.

The wise man, who realizes all beings as not distinct from his own Self and his own Self as the Self of all beings, does not, by virtue of that perception, hate anyone.

-Isha Upanishad

If the many, and the One are indeed the same Reality, then it is not all modes of worship alone, but equally all modes of work, all modes of struggle, all modes of creation, which are paths of realization. No distinction, henceforth, between sacred and secular. To labor is to pray. To conquer is to renounce. Life is itself religion. To

have and to hold is as stern a trust as to quit and to quit and to avoid.

Reflections:



Reflections from Christian scripture:



Reflections from Hindu scripture:



Reflections from Baha'i Faith scripture:



Reflections from Muslim scripture:



Reflections of scripture from other world religion:



DISCUSSION

Open Plenary-A religious reaction to the issue of dignity/indignity in our society

Divide into four groups with representation from different religious groups.

- Each group discussing one of the texts provided
- Each group shares the main points with the larger group.

Joint commitment of the group to pursue dignity of all men



ACTIVITIES



MOVIE CLIP: The Imam and the priest

SAMPLE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. According to the scriptures read, what is the difference between the importance placed on human dignity in the scriptures and the value actually placed on it by society?
2. Other than the obligation placed on us by the scriptures, what are the implications of this emphasis on how we relate with each other?
3. Do you think it is better to respect the dignity of one another willingly or unwillingly? Before being asked or after being asked?
4. Should it matter to us as long as our actions are not “hurting” someone?
5. Why do scripture place such high value on human dignity?
6. How are the different scriptures similar on the commitment to the respect of human dignity?
7. How can our joint commitment to the respect of human dignity lead to action?




ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES

“We have honored the sons of Adam; provided them with transport on land and sea; given them for sustenance things, good and pure; and conferred on them special favors, above a great part of Our creation” (17:70). And: “Proclaim! (Or read!) In the name of Thy Lord and Cher-

isher, who created- Created man, out of a (mere) clot of congealed Blood- Proclaim! And Thy Lord is Most Bountiful- He who taught (the use of) the pen- Taught man that which He knew not.” (96:1-5). According to teachings of the Holy Qur’an, God (Allah) gave human beings the best shape and form: “O Iblis! What prevents thee from prostrating thyself to one whom I have created with my hands? Art thou haughty? Or art thou one of the high (and mighty) ones?” (95:4) Not only that He created human being by His hands and gave humans the best form, but He called the spirit of human being His spirit to give honor and dignity to human beings: “I breathed into him my spirit.” (15:29; 38:72) He taught him all the names. “And He taught Adam the names of all things; then He placed them before the angels, and said: “Tell Me the names of these if ye are right.” (2:31) “And behold, we said to the angels: “Bow down to Adam:” and they bowed down: not so Iblis: he refused and was haughty: he was of those who reject Faith. (2:34) He gave human being intellect and freedom of the will. (16:78;23:78; 32; 9; 46:26; 67:23) And He made human being His Khalifah (Representative) in the earth. (2:30;33:72) –

Siddiqi m- Muslims for Human Dignity. (Accessed on April 14 2007)

 Know ye not why we created you all from the same dust? That no one should exalt himself over the other. Ponder at all times in your hearts how ye were created. Since We have created you all from one same substance it is incumbent on you to be even as one soul, to walk with the same feet, eat with the same mouth and dwell in the same land, that from your inmost being, by your deeds and actions, the signs of oneness and the essence of detachment may be made manifest. Bahá’u’lláh, The Hidden Words



Job 34:16 “If you have understanding, hear this; listen to the sound of my words:17 Should one who hates justice govern? Will you condemn Him who is most just? 18 Is it fitting to say to a king, ‘You are worthless,’ And to nobles, ‘You are wicked’? 19 Yet He is not partial to princes, Nor does He regard the rich more than the poor; For they are all the work of His hands.

ॐ He who sees the supreme Lord dwelling alike in all beings, the imperishable in things that perish, he sees indeed



Job 31:13-23 “If I have despised the cause of my male or female servant when they complained against me, What then shall I do when God rises up? When He punishes, how shall I answer Him? Did not He who made me in the womb make them? Did not the same one fashion us in the womb? “If I have kept the poor from their desire, Or caused the eyes of the widow to fail, Or eaten my morsel by myself, So that the fatherless could not eat of it (But from my youth I reared him as a father, And from my mother’s womb I guided the widow); If I have seen anyone perish for lack of clothing, Or any poor man without covering; If his heart has not blessed me, And if he was not warmed with the fleece of my sheep; If I have raised my hand against the fatherless, When I saw I had help in the gate; Then let my arm fall from my shoulder, Let my arm be torn from the socket. For destruction from God is a terror to me, And because of His magnificence I cannot endure.



ACTIVITY

Create joint statement on commitment to respect of human dignity

SESSION 3

IRREVOCABLE DIRECTIVES; COMMITMENT TO A CULTURE OF NON-VIOLENCE AND RESPECT FOR LIFE



150 minutes

Energizer:

- Close your eyes and imagine the days of the week
- What color is each day?
- Write down the color of each day
- Review and compare people's different color associations, and - where people consciously know and are willing to share their reasons/associations - review these differences too.



Session overview:

The big picture: As stated in the preamble of the Constitution of UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation), "Since wars began in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men [and women] that the defences of peace must be constructed."

A culture of peace will be achieved when citizens of the world understand global problems, have the skills to resolve conflicts and struggle for justice non-violently, live by international standards of human rights and equity, appreciate cultural diversity, and respect the Earth and each other.

When we eliminate violence as an option for resolving conflicts, we make room for creative alternatives. Co-operation, acceptance, communication and problem-solving become essential tools. Conflict itself can be viewed as an opportunity for growth and expanded communication rather than a precursor to violence and a threat to dignity, security and life.

The preservation of life and human dignity are the central guiding principles for living together in a secure world. No people, no state, no race, no religion has the right to hate, to discriminate against, to cleanse, to exile, much less to liquidate a foreign minority which is different in behavior or holds different beliefs.

Reflections:



Reflections from Christian scripture:



Reflections from Hindu scripture:



Reflections from Baha'i Faith scripture:



Reflections from Muslim scripture:



Reflections of scripture from other world religion:



DISCUSSION

-A religious reaction to the issue of respect for life in our society.

Divide into four groups with representation from different religious groups.

- Each group discussing one of the texts provided
- Each group shares the main points with the larger group.

Discuss the following statement in a plenary session by His Holiness the XIV Dalai Lama

“I believe that we must consciously develop a greater sense of Universal Responsibility. We must learn to work not just for our own individual self, family or nation, but for the benefit of all mankind.”- His Holiness the XIV Dalai Lama

Joint commitment of the group to pursue respect for life and non-violence



ACTIVITIES



ROLE PLAY

Participants to act out the scenario provided below;

The scenario above is continued here. As P2 talks on use of non-violence means of solving this conflict P4 walks in fuming and carrying an object ready to hit someone. P2 asks why s/he is fuming and says he is bitter on how P2's cattle has fed on his vegetable plantation that s/he was expecting to harvest soon. P4 says s/he is not here to fight but to dialogue on way forward to avoid such happenings in future especially during such dry seasons when food is scarce. As one, they dialogue on a way forward.



DISCUSSION

To discuss the outcome of the role-play and the truth that came out within the perspectives.



SAMPLE GUIDING QUESTIONS (FACILITATOR MAY USE TO ASK PARTICIPANTS)

- What did you see?
- What did you hear?
- Does this affect us in our community?
- Was there evidence of religious bias in the responses by the participants?



SAMPLE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. According to the scriptures read, what is the difference between the importance placed on human respect in the scriptures and the value actually placed on it by society?
2. Other than the obligation placed on us by the scriptures, what are the implications of this emphasis on how we relate with each other?
3. Do you think it is better to commit to a culture of non-violence and respect to life willingly or unwillingly? Before being asked or after being asked?
4. Should it matter to us as long as our actions are not “hurting” someone?
5. How are the different scriptures similar on the commitment to the respect for life? And non-violence?
6. How can our joint commitment to the respect for life lead to action?



ACTIVITY

Look for joint statement on commitment to respect for life and non-violence.



ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES

“O you who have believed, let not a people ridicule (another) people.49.11 (Islam)

“And of his signs is that he created for you from yourselves mates that you may find tranquility in them. And he placed between you affection and mercy. Indeed in that are signs for a people who give thought.30.21 (Islam)

“We are all begotten of the immortal.” *‘Amritasya Putrah Vayam’* (Hinduism)

“Every individual soul is potentially divine”, -Swami Vivekananda. (Hinduism)

Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him John 13:16 (Christian)

“Know ye not, why We created ye all from the same dust? That no one should exalt himself over the other.” Quote from Hidden Words: (Baha’i Faith)

“Let no man exalt himself above another; all are but bondslaves before the Lord . . .” Quote from Kitab-i-Aqdas: The Most Holy BookMost Holy Book, (Baha’i Faith)

SESSION 4

COMMITMENT TO A CULTURE OF SOLIDARITY AND A JUST ECONOMIC ORDER



150 minutes



Ice Breaker:

This is a simple exercise for groups, and involves many different learning elements: understanding strategies, teamwork, presentations, argument, debate, analysis and group decision-making.

The activity is based on the funny one-liner:

“The early bird may get the worm, but the second mouse gets the cheese.”

Instructions

Split the group into two teams.

Nominate one team to be ‘early bird’ and the other team to be ‘second mouse’ (allow the group to decide this themselves,).

Give the teams 5-10 minutes, each to develop a 60-second presentation as to why their strategy (‘early bird’ or ‘second mouse’) is best for life

Encourage the teams to make use of the knowledge and abilities and views of all team members in creating their presentations.

After the two presentations chair a 5-10 minute debate between the teams of the question:

“Early bird or second mouse: Which is the most effective strategy for business (or work or life)?”

After the debate hold a ‘free’ vote to see what the combined group now believes about the question. Allow but do not encourage abstentions

(‘don’t knows’). Encourage group members to vote as individuals, putting their team loyalty to one side.

There are many possible learning areas to review after this exercise, , for example:

- Different strategies for different situations - adaptability versus consistency
- different strategies for different types of people and personalities or organizational cultures
- assembling an argument/case/presentation in a team against a tight deadline
- presenting a concise and convincing argument/presentation
- constructive debate and discussion - using evidence, examples, structure, passion, etc



Session overview: The big picture

No one has the right to use her or his possessions without concern for the needs of society and Earth. Religious traditions have incorporated a deep yearning for social justice that can inspire the debates of today. Religious traditions also embrace the idea of human dignity; in the biblical idea of the creation of all human beings in the image of God, or the Koranic idea of all human beings as called upon to act as *khalifa* (God’s deputies on Earth, as some translate this concept).

In practice, religious communities support democracy and human rights from their own unique contexts. In a speech by The Holy Father John Paul 2 in the 1960s, the Catholic Church officially endorsed Human rights and religious liberty during the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the European convention on Human rights. This shows that religious communities are part of society and have to undergo the same learning processes that society as a whole has to tackle.

In the case of Islam and other world religions, there have been efforts to

reconcile the requirements of religion with a commitment to democracy and human rights.

Reflections:



Reflections from Christian scripture:



Reflections from Hindu scripture:



Reflections from Baha'i Faith scripture:



Reflections from Muslim scripture:



Reflections of scripture from other world religion:



DISCUSSION

-A religious reaction to the issue of dealing honestly and fairly with our society.

Divide into four groups with representation from different religious groups.

- Each group discussing one of the texts provided
- Each group shares the main points with the larger group.

Joint commitment of the group to pursue issues to dealing honestly and fairly



ACTIVITIES



ROLE PLAY

Split the group into working teams

The exercise will take 5-10 minutes plus whatever review you think is appropriate for your situation.

Equipment: Some daily national or local newspapers. Enough for every person to have at least 2-3 sheets.

Issue the newspapers to the group or team(s).

Instruction to team(s):

Each person must find a news story in the newspaper to which he/she can apply a spiritual principle, by way of interpreting the story and being able to explain the story in terms of the chosen principle.

Example principles, which can be illustrated in news stories:

- peace
- forgiveness

- mercy
- tolerance
- reconciliation
- etc....



DISCUSSION

To discuss the outcome of the exercise and the truth that came out within the perspectives.



SAMPLE GUIDING QUESTIONS FACILITATOR MAY USE TO ASK PARTICIPANTS

- What did you see?
- What did you hear?
- Does this affect us in our community?
- Was there evidence of religious bias in the responses by the participants?



SAMPLE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. According to the scriptures read, what is the difference placed on dealing honestly and fairly and the value actually placed on it by society?
2. Other than the obligation placed on us by the scriptures, what are the implications of this emphasis on how we relate with each other?
3. Do you think it is better to deal honestly and fairly willingly or unwillingly? Before being asked or after being asked?
4. Should it matter to us as long as our actions are not “hurting” someone?
5. How are the different scriptures similar on the commitment to a culture of dealing honestly and fairly?

6. How can we reach a joint commitment to a culture of dealing honestly and fairly?



ACTIVITY

Look for joint statement on commitment to dealing honestly and fairly.



ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES

‘O people, listen carefully, your Lord is one Lord, there is no doubt about it. Your ancestor, is one ancestor, there is no doubt about it. Listen well to my words: no Arab has any superiority over a non--Arab, and no non—Arab is superior to an Arab. No black is superior to a brown or red, and no red superior to any black. If there is any superiority in anyone it is due to his God--fearing qualities. Have I conveyed the message?’ the Prophet asked the people. The people answered from all corners, ‘Indeed so! God be witness.’ Then the Prophet said: ‘Let him that is present tell it unto him that is absent.’ (Al-Jamili Ahkam al-Qur’an, 16:342)-(Islam)

Deut 15:7-8: “If there is among you a poor man of your brethren, within any of the gates in your land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart nor shut your hand from your poor brother, “but you shall open your hand wide to him and willingly lend him sufficient for his need, whatever he needs. (Christianity)

1 Sam 2:7-8: “The LORD makes poor and makes rich; he brings low and lifts up. He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the beggar from the ash heap, to set them among princes and make them inherit the throne of glory.” (Christianity)

It is one thing to have a philosophy, even to read and master it, and quite a different thing to live it and express it in forms of life, conduct and behavior. -Shankaracharya in the introduction of his commentary on the

Gita-(Hindu)

Injustice Anywhere Is A Threat To Justice Everywhere-Bahá'u'lláh

“The well-being of mankind, its peace and security, are unattainable unless and until its unity is firmly established” --Bahá'u'lláh (Baha'i Faith)

Regard man as a mine rich in gems of inestimable value,” –Bahá'u'lláh-
(Baha'i Faith)

SESSION 5

COMMITMENT TO A CULTURE OF TOLERANCE AND A LIFE OF TRUTHFULNESS



150 minutes



Ice- Breaker

Exercise:

- Introduction/scene-setting:

The closing of any training workshop prompts many of us to consider new aims and plans, or to renew a commitment towards a change or improvement of some sort. Commitments tend to succeed where there is a plan, especially for aims which contain steps leading towards the final result. Without a plan, little can change.

- This process can help:

1. Think of a commitment or change you want to make.
2. Write it down - describe it as a clear, realistic and measurable outcome.
3. Work backwards, identifying the steps necessary for achieving it, back to the starting point: i.e., now.
4. Attach timescales and resources as necessary.

You now have a simple plan. Take it away and refine it as necessary.



Session overview:

The big picture:

“All over the world, we find endless lies and deceit, swindling and hypocrisy, ideology and demagoguery... Representatives of religions who

dismiss other religions as of little value and who preach fanaticism and intolerance instead of respect and understanding...No woman or man, no institution, no state or church or religious community has the right to speak lies to other humans...This is especially true...for representatives of religion - when they stir up prejudice, hatred and enmity towards those of different belief, or even incite or legitimize religious wars, they deserve the condemnation of humankind and the loss of their adherents.”
- Hans Küng, “Explanatory remarks concerning a ‘Declaration of the Religions for a Global Ethic.’”

The concept that all the great religions proceed from the same Source merits serious contemplation. The injunction to love one’s fellow men echoes throughout all the Holy Writings. The *Old Testament* enjoins: “*thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*” (*Lev. 19:18*). The *Bhagavad-Gita* (12:13) instructs: “*A man should not hate any living creature. Let him be friendly and compassionate to all.*” These words sound not so different from “*love your enemies, bless them that curse you*” as uttered by Jesus (*Matthew 5:44*). Compassion, loving-kindness, sympathetic joy, and equanimity are said by Buddhist scriptures to be divine conditions of the mind. “*Do you love your creator? Love your fellow-beings first,*” reads a well-known Islamic tradition. And Bahá’u’lláh, the Prophet-Founder of the Bahá’í Faith writes: “*ye were created to show love to one another and not perversity and rancour. Take pride not in love for yourselves but in love for all mankind*” (*Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh*, 136). So prominent is the teaching of universal love among all religions that it could be viewed as a goal common to them all. That the basic human virtues -- kindness, generosity, humility, trustworthiness -- are taught by all religions would also suggest a common origin.

Reflections:



Reflections from Christian scripture:

 Reflections from Hindu scripture:

 Reflections from Baha'i Faith scripture:

 Reflections from Muslim scripture:

 Reflections of scripture from other world religion:

 DISCUSSION

A religious reaction to the issue of speaking and acting truthfully in our society

Divide into four groups with representation from different religious groups.

- Each group discussing one of the texts provided

- Each group shares the main points with the larger group.

Joint commitment of the group to pursue issues of speaking and acting truthfully



ACTIVITIES



ROLE PLAY

Participants to act out the scenario provided below;

Despite these persons having different religious backgrounds, they both agree to help one another to live a happy life. Suddenly, P2 confesses that s/he had bribed the chief so that severe action could be taken on P2 during payback. S/he also asked for more than what was stolen because of greed. This sparks a debate. The participants use their religious scriptures for reflection.



DISCUSSION

To discuss the outcome of the role-play and the truth that came out within the perspectives.



SAMPLE GUIDING QUESTIONS FACILITATOR MAY USE TO ASK PARTICIPANTS

- What did you see?
- What did you hear?
- Does this affect us in our community?
- Was there evidence of religious bias in the responses by the participants?
- How can this conflict situation be transformed using the scripture?



SAMPLE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. According to the scriptures read, what is the difference placed on speaking and acting truthfully and the value actually placed on it by society?
2. Other than the obligation placed on us by the scriptures, what are the implications of this emphasis on how we relate with each other?
3. Do you think it is better to speak and act truthfully willingly or unwillingly? Before being asked or after being asked?
4. Should it matter to us as long as our actions are not “hurting” someone?
5. How are the different scriptures similar on the commitment to a culture of commitment to a culture of tolerance and a life of truthfulness?
6. How can we reach a joint commitment to a culture speaking and acting truthfully.



ACTIVITY

Look for joint statement on commitment to speaking and acting truthfully



ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES

Om sarve bhavantu sukhinah. Sarve santu niraamayaah.

Sarve bhadraani pashyantu. Maa kaschid dukhbhaag bhavet.

May all beings be happy. May all beings be healthy.

May all beings experience prosperity. May none in the world suffer.

-Sanskrit(Hindu)

Ekam sat vipraha bahudha vadanti

Truth is one, the wise call it by many names.- Sanskrit (Hindu)

“God does not forbid you to be kind and equitable to those who have neither fought against your faith nor driven you out of your homes. In fact God loves the equitable.” Chapter 60, Verse 8- Quran (Islam)

“And what will explain to you what the steep path is? It is the freeing of a (slave) from bondage; or the giving of food in a day of famine to an orphan relative, or to a needy in distress. Then will he be of those who believe, enjoin fortitude and encourage kindness and compassion.” Chapter 90, Verses 12-17-Quran (Islam)

Micah 4:3-5 “...they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken it. For all people will walk every one in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the LORD our God for ever and ever.” (Christianity)

“Ye were created to show love to one another and not perversity and rancour. Take pride not in love for yourselves but in love for all mankind” (Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, 136). (Baha'i Faith)

SESSION 6

COMMITMENT TO A CULTURE OF EQUAL RIGHTS AND PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN



150 minutes

Energizer:

- Issue each team with a sheet of flip-chart paper, a pencil and a marker pen, and give them five minutes to draw a map of a part of the world, for example, Europe, Africa, , Asia, the counties of Kenya, South Africa, Egypt, etc. Anywhere that might relate to the group and its responsibilities or territory. It's a challenging exercise which is a lot of fun when teams display and compare their maps. Increase the degree of difficulty by asking for capital cities or county/state capital towns to be added, or populations' estimates, etc. Reduce the level of difficulty by providing a list of countries or states or counties, towns etc.



Session overview:

The big picture:

Religion opens up possibilities for a society that cut across all social, economic or intellectual distinctions.

Question: Cultural and sometimes religious practices around the world demonstrate that men should receive favorable treatment in some areas, particularly employment and education. What do you think?

Despite affirmations that the sexes should be treated equally, and the firm vocal support towards equal rights for men and women, men often get preference when it comes to good jobs, higher education or even in some cases the simple right to work outside the home.

In both developing countries and wealthy ones, there is a pronounced gap between a belief in the equality of the sexes and how that translates into reality.

Using scriptural references and making reference to the different religious

tradition, tell us what your religion says about gender equality.
 Do you think men and women should have equal rights?
 Do you think one gender or the other should be given preference, either in some cases or all the time?
 Do you think equal rights has been achieved in your religion?
 Do you think men or women have “a better life”?

Reflections:



Reflections from Christian scripture:



Reflections from Hindu scripture:



Reflections from Baha'i Faith scripture:



Reflections from Muslim scripture:

 Reflections of scripture from other world religion:



DISCUSSION

A religious reaction to the issue of respecting and loving one another in our society

Divide into four groups with representation from different religious groups.

- Each group discussing one of the texts provided
- Each group shares the main points with the larger group.

Joint commitment of the group to pursue issues of respecting and loving one another.



ACTIVITIES



DISCUSSION

DISCUSSION

Discuss the outcome of the role-play and the truth that came out within the perspectives.



SAMPLE GUIDING QUESTIONS FACILITATOR MAY USE TO ASK PARTICIPANTS

- What did you see?

- What did you hear?
- Does this affect us in our community?
- Was there evidence of religious bias in the responses by the participants?
- How can this conflict situation be transformed using the scripture?



SAMPLE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. According to the scriptures read, what is the difference placed on respecting and loving one another and the value actually placed on it by society?
2. Other than the obligation placed on us by the scriptures, what are the implications of this emphasis on how we relate with each other?
3. Do you think it is better to respect and love one another willingly or unwillingly? Before being asked or after being asked?
4. Should it matter to us as long as our actions are not “hurting” someone?
5. How are the different scriptures similar on the commitment to a culture of equal rights and partnership between men and women?
6. How can we reach a joint commitment to a culture of respect and love for one another



ACTIVITY

Look for joint statement on commitment to respect and love one for another



ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES

Session 6 equal rights and partnerships between women and men

“Women and men have been and will always be equal in the sight of God.”
-- Bahá'u'lláh (Baha'i Faith)

“He Who is your lord, the All-Merciful, cherisheth in His heart the desire of beholding the entire human race as one soul and one body.” -- Bahá'u'lláh (Baha'i Faith)

(O Mankind! We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another. Verily, the most honorable of you in the Sight of Allah is the believer who has Taqwa (piety and righteousness). Verily, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware.)
[49:13] (Islam)

(O mankind! Be dutiful to your Lord, Who created you from a single person (Adam), and from him (Adam) He created his wife (Eve), and from them both He created many men and women...) [4:1] (Islam)

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.” (Christianity)

“With God as guide, let us take, the first step to nourish each other, the second step to grow together in strength, the third step to preserve our wealth, the fourth step to share our joys and sorrows, the fifth step to care for our children, the sixth step to be together forever, and the seventh step to remain lifelong friends, perfect halves to make a perfect whole.”- Vows made around Agni (the Nuptial fire) during the rite of the Vedic wedding ceremony called *Sapatpadi*. (Hindu)

SESSION 7

A TRANSFORMATION OF CONSCIOUSNESS



150 minutes



Ice- Breaker : Three truths and a lie;

Everyone writes their name along with four pieces of information about themselves on a large piece of paper. For example Mercy likes singing and has three children and likes cooking. Participants then circulate their pieces of paper. They meet in pairs, show their papers to each other and try to guess which of the ‘facts’ is a lie.

Session overview:

This session intends to bring the participants to the understanding that all our decisions and deeds, even our omissions and failures, have consequences, not only to ourselves but to all around.



The big picture:

All our decisions and deeds, even our omissions and failures, have consequences.

Reflections:



Reflections from Christian scripture:



Reflections from Hindu scripture:



Reflections from Baha'i Faith scripture:



Reflections from Muslim scripture:



Reflections of scripture from other world religion:



DISCUSSION

Brainstorming- read the “Ethic of Reciprocity” passages from various religions provided below and discuss their meanings and implication for the discussants.

Divide into four groups with representation from different religious groups.

Ensure that the groups do not discuss the same scripture.

Ethic of reciprocity scriptures:

Christianity

All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye so to them; for this is the law and the prophets.

Matthew 7:12

Confucianism

Do not do to others what you would not like yourself. Then there will be no resentment against you, either in the family or in the state.

Analects 12:2

Buddhism

Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful. Udana-Varga 5,1

Hinduism

This is the sum of duty; do naught onto others what you would not have them do unto you. Mahabharata 5,1517

Islam

No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself. Sunnah

Judaism

What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellowman. This is the entire Law; all the rest is commentary. Talmud, Shabbat 3id

Taoism

Regard your neighbor's gain as your gain, and your neighbor's loss as your own loss. Tai Shang Kan Yin P'ien

Zoroastrianism

That nature alone is good which refrains from doing another whatsoever is not good for itself. Dadisten-I-dinik, 94,5

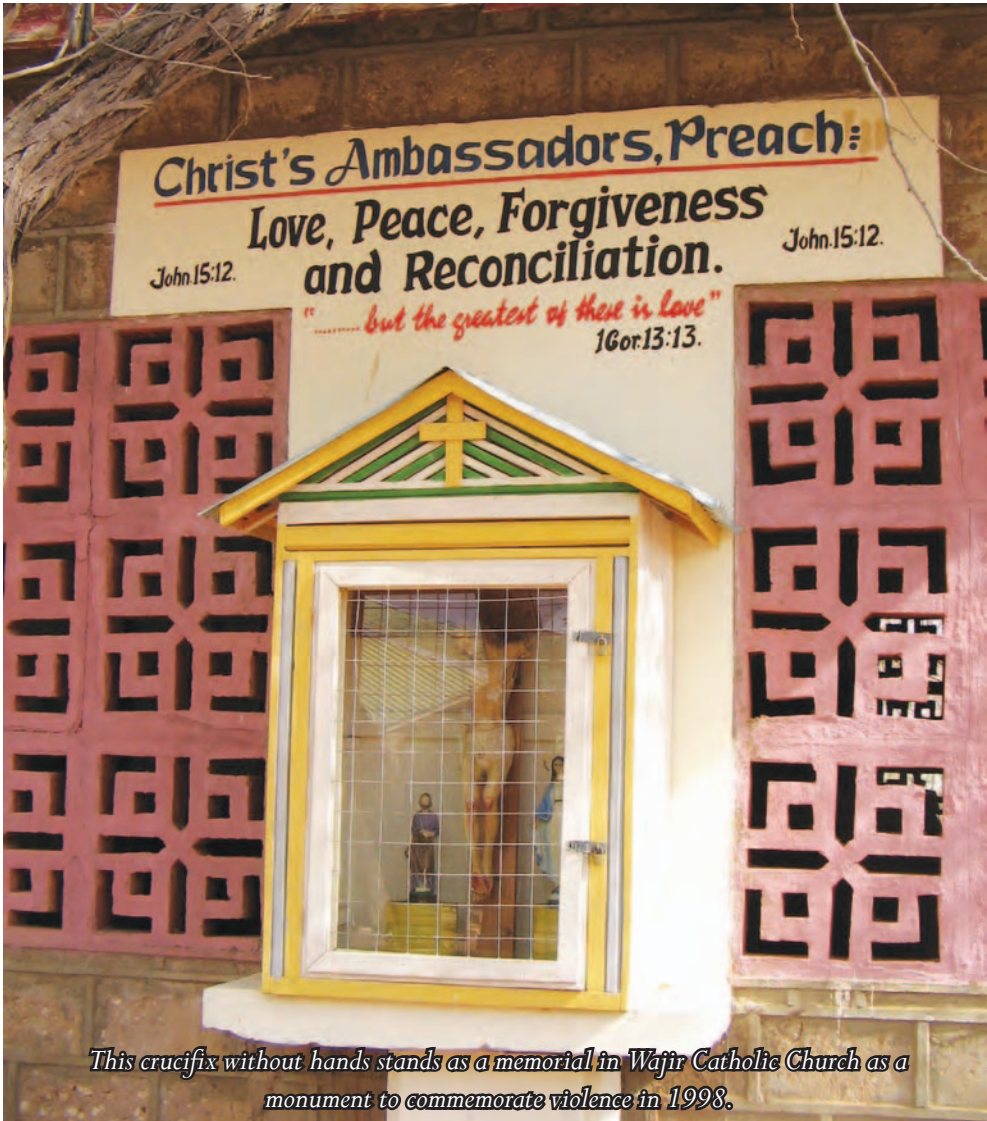
SAMPLE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. According to the scriptures read, what is the difference coming out in achieving a transformation in the consciousness of individuals and in public life and the value actually placed on it by society?
2. Other than the obligation placed on us by the scriptures, what are the implications of this emphasis on how we relate with each other?
3. Do you think it is better to achieve a transformation in the consciousness of individuals and in public life willingly or unwillingly? Before being asked or after being asked?
4. Should it matter to us as long as our actions are not "hurting" someone?
5. How are the different scriptures similar on the commitment to a culture of a transformation of consciousness?

6. How can we reach a joint commitment to a culture to achieve a transformation in the consciousness of individuals and in public life?

ACTIVITY

Look for joint statement on commitment to achieve a transformation in the consciousness of individuals and in public life



SESSION 8:

FAITH AND RECONCILIATION

It's (reconciliation) primary goal and key contribution is to seek innovative ways to create a time and place, within various levels of affected population, to address, integrate, and embrace a painful past and the necessary shared future as a means of dealing with present.” John Paul Lederach.

What is reconciliation?

It is a process that aims at restoration of broken relationships. Reconciliation occurs when:

- Members of conflict parties take initiative and responsibility to commence restoration of broken relationships.
- There is openness and willingness to engage in a dialogue process.
- There is readiness to extend and accept forgiveness.
- There is courage to repent.
- There is willingness to embrace restitution when and where possible.
- There is acknowledgement that the well being of all people enhances unity.



DISCUSSION

While making reference to the movie clip an Imam and a priest, respond to these questions

- From the different religious positions what is the root cause of religious conflict in modern society?
- What is the extent of the problem
- Has there been any social damage?

- Is there a possibility of a lasting solution?
- How do we achieve it?
- Who leads the way?

Ask participants to include in their discussion scriptures from their different religions that address:

Cooperation:

What comes about when there is *acceptance, understanding, tolerance and dialogue*.

Celebration of our diversity:

Because though different we are God's creation and belong to the same family.

Forgiveness:

For all of us have shortcomings hence need take responsibility, admit wrong and seek to apologies where necessary.

Restitution:

In form of reparation or compensation for the affected

Implementation of justice and equity.



DISCUSSION

Discuss from different religious perspectives the following basic concepts on reconciliation as understood by people of faith:

Free public space

As space which creates conditions under which victims might regain their humanity and dignity helping victims reach out to the wrong doers to bring about their repentance, and supporting their reconciliation process such as those initiated by the government.

Justice

Justice being the presence of right relations between God and creatures, among humans beings and between humans beings and the environment. Justice that addresses reparation or remuneration for victims and structural inequities..

Truth

A quest of truth: establish a pattern of truthfulness upon which society can be built.

Peace

Giving scriptural evidence, how can we all live peacefully?

Forgiveness

How can we deal with past injustices in a way that does not distract us from our humanity, but one that empowers us to share in graciousness and fullness of restoring humanity.

Mercy

Cite and discuss scripture that encourage us to dispense mercy to wrong doers.

Power

How can we address the abuse of power and bring about the use of power to cause the experience of self-giving leadership rather than the dominance and the lack of concern of secular leadership.

Benefits of Reconciliation between and among religious institutions

- National reconciliation
- Community reconciliation
- Individual reconciliation
- Reliance and existing structures

- Respect for religious monuments and memorials

Additional thoughts

The Quran says: “O people, I am the messenger of God to you all (7:158) and we have not sent thee but as a (source of) mercy for all the nations (21:107). Thus Islam is for the whole of humanity regardless of any differences. Islam addresses itself to the conscience of humanity and it therefore disregards all false barriers of race, status, wealth, colour, clan and blood.

Discuss this statement and give reference from the different religious texts

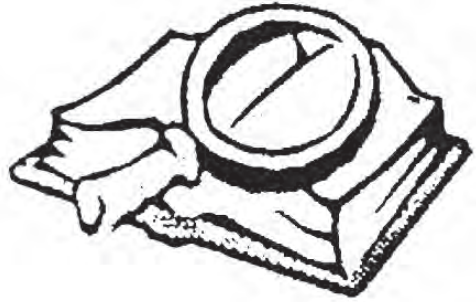


Participants embracing as a sign of reconciliation after an ANV training.

***THE PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF AN IRD
TRAINING WORKSHOP: What a facilitator
needs to know.***

Before starting the dialogue...

The aim of an IRD workshop is to teach the principles and practice dialogue, with a focus on the development of attitudes leading to changes in patterns of behavior towards people of different religions. Since there are many important things that should be considered before engaging a group of people from different religious backgrounds for a dialogue to be effective, key fundamental issues needs to be stated at the outset of the guide which can increase the possibility of these aims being satisfied.



This is to suggest that the leaders of training workshops be creative in considering the entire training workshop as a picture, or mirror, of IRD.

It is essential to always be prepared that the dialogue partners may not, and do not have to agree on everything. “Agree to disagree” and learn to appreciate the differences. Moreover, discussants don’t have to defend their own faith, but a predisposition towards answering several questions will be appreciated. It is also important to remember that IRD is a meeting with people, and not with institutions or official religious bodies. Remember that the individuals who meet might hold attitudes different to the mainstream thought in their religion. Therefore, separating the position of the individual, the religion and the institution from each other is of great value.

Be careful with your language. Speak frankly but with a language that does not hurt the other. Say what you need to say but respect members of the group. Try and put yourself in their shoes and be empathetic. In addition to that don’t be afraid of feelings being evoked in the dialogue since reli-

gion is an emotional topic. And do not be afraid to change your previous impressions, perceptions, images, thoughts etc. of the other – and even of yourself.

A Knowledge of your own religion

Dialogue is an interaction between different sides. It is not only about your interest in the group, but also about their interest in you. A facilitator might be asked questions on their religion, beliefs, and reasons for practices/customs. It might be helpful to prepare also for this occasion in order to answer the questions – or at least to deal with them. Being an expert is not the main prerequisite for be involvement in IRD and it's not a big shame to admit that you don't know. But you should feel confident enough to talk about your own faith and address the upcoming questions. This will help to reduce the fear of losing your own faith in the dialogue.

Keep in mind that things that are obvious to you may not be clear to others. Gain knowledge of the other.

It would add value for the facilitator to have a slight knowledge of the basics of other beliefs besides his/her own. This will create a good starting point for the dialogue. This is also a matter of respect as it shows the group that you are prepared, curious, interested and treating them seriously.

Keep in mind that things that are obvious to you may not be clear to others. Gain knowledge of the other.

Knowing your fears, limits and expectations

A vital factor in dialogue is the approach that you have at the starting point. It is important to be aware of the motivation and expectation that brings the group to the IRD meeting. While realizing that the motivations might be different for each partner, knowing what is expected by the group is important, since it will affect the direction of your dialogue.

Keep in mind that you cannot know beforehand where exactly the dialogue will end up. It is also important to realize everything that you al-

ready know about the group and their expectations; is it an objective, positive or maybe negative vision?

It's good to be involved or start involvement in dialogue, but it does not necessarily mean you will not have prejudices or share stereotypes.

Nobody has to be perfect and ideal, the facilitator only needs to ensure that all dialogue partners get to learn from each other; and so he/she may need to pursue every opportunity to allow the group to revise visions of others that they had at the beginning, with the reality presented during the dialogue.

There is no compulsory expectation for the facilitator to be an expert already on inter-religious issues, but it is good to know his/her own limits and expectations in order not to disappoint or to force the group to do things they may not feel comfortable doing.

Sometimes limits are also present in religious rules. Learn about limits specified by your own religion and the others. The facilitator may do well to learn these rules before the meeting, but also during the confrontation. Don't be afraid to ask questions.

Making sure the above elements are present is the first step to managing effective dialogue. The other crucial piece to successful dialogue is



Participant in an IRD meeting in Garissa.

through using deep listening skills to ensure participants don't just hear one another's words – they listen deeply for understanding and make connections.

Using Deep Listening Skills

To truly listen means you attend to, follow, and reflect upon what is being said by others.

Attending: Ninety-three percent of what we “hear” in communication is nonverbal! Attending demonstrates that the listener is physically involved in hearing what a speaker is saying. Paying attention to the physical body, posture and movement, tone of voice, eye contact, and other nonverbal cues will provide the facilitator with considerably more information. Attending is a genuine intent to understand the other person. Inauthentic leaders are transparent in this respect. Healthy groups can read at the nonverbal level when the leader is being dishonest, reticent, or manipulative.

Even when a group cannot articulate this, they know there is dissonance between the leader's intent and impact. Groups can sense a disconnect between what is being said and what is being done.

Such behavior undermines the development of trust that is essential to dialogue, and healthy group development. Examples of authentic attending skill are a nodding of the head, sitting up and leaning forward toward the individual speaking, good eye contact, and being focused yet relaxed.

Following: This skill involves being appropriately and actively silent allowing the silence to be “the mother of the wisest thoughts.” The speaker uses language that invites more exploration and learning, which opens the space for inquiry. Examples of this skill are open-ended questions and “I hear you” responses used in a reasonable, non-rote, and genuine manner.

Reflecting: This skill involves carefully listening and then inte-



grating what was heard, and rephrasing in your own words, the content and the feeling conveyed by the speaker. The listener reads at multiple levels and verbally communicates what they understand the speaker is saying. This enables the speaker to affirm or correct the listener's understanding.

Case study

Following is a brief case study on the importance of active listening and the recommended response.

A colleague, Njeri, is talking to you at lunch about something that happened at work today. She tells you that she turned in a report to her boss an hour later than the deadline. She explains that her daughter woke up not feeling well and in her rush to arrange alternative child-care she arrived to work late. When she delivered the report to the boss he seemed perturbed. Because he was on his way to an important meeting regarding the report, he showed no interest in hearing the reason for missing the deadline. Njeri wonders what he thinks of her and what this means for her.

Someone not engaged in deep listening would tell Njeri what to do, or share a time when they delivered a report late. A reflective response would be something like this: "You were concerned about your daughter's health and wanted to make sure she was cared for. This contributed to your turning in the report late. Your boss needed the report for a meeting that morning. Now you are worried about your boss being upset and are concerned about what he thinks and what he will do."

The paraphrasing of what Njeri shared will enable her to clarify her own thinking and the effect she may have had in the situation.

Deep listening increases individual and group capacity to be empathic toward others. It lessens defensiveness and paves the way to more freely exploring one's own and others' perceptions, assumptions, and opinions. At this point and this point only, is true learning possible. Not until participants are able to expose the underlying assumptions that construct their

own views, are any changes of substance and sustainability possible.

Dialogue and Effective Change

When there is an opportunity to use all the deep listening skills and adhere to the established criteria for dialogue, a group will develop the trust and shared meaning necessary to engage in the adaptive work of change. Dialogue creates an environment and process for empathic examination; and in doing so, the choice to change remains within the control of the individual rather than in the leader or from the pressure of group think. Underlying assumptions which contribute to miscommunication and conflict will be brought out and the parameters of the issues being addressed will be clear.

Too often, the tendency in a group dealing with attitude change is to minimize the anxiety and tension by rushing into problem-solving and decision-making. Inevitably, listening suffers. Engaging in dialogue helps a group get clear about the issues, thoroughly hear the multiple perspectives, and lays the foundation for establishing effective communication, a strong relationship, and long term trust. The sheer act of being listened to and understood without fear of retaliation, attack or judgment is healing in a group, especially one with a history of conflict or repression of differences. It takes leadership to use these skills and implement the ground rules and criteria for engaging in dialogue.

Summary

Dialogue is especially useful when the following needs are clearly identified beforehand:

- The need to increase trust.
- The need to achieve mutual understanding before engaging in decision making.
- The need to deal with emotion-laden, potentially divisive content.
- The need to manage diverse opinions about a topic or issue.

- The needs to determine shared interests and establish common ground.
- The need to create new ways of seeing and doing things.
- The need to develop cohesiveness and community.

Practical preparations for a workshop

When aim, objectives and dialogue partners are already defined, there are other special practicalities to for the facilitator to consider that would enrich and make it easier for him/her to conduct the workshop. It is necessary for the facilitator to get to know the group's dynamics – as many individuals can share, but also might have different, opinions, beliefs, prejudices, and approaches. Prudence demands that the facilitator brief everyone on the practical needs of the other group.

Other things to consider:

- Handle all religious objects including symbols and books with respect;
- Plan any event to ensure that each faith involved is equally represented in the planning team, and that there is a gender balance. Also check that this balance carries over into the groups who will take part in the dialogue;
- If you are visiting or holding an event in a religious building: be aware of what is considered to be appropriate or inappropriate behavior in religious buildings. Find out if there are any particular clothing requirements.

Organizing an activity

When? Calendar of main religious festivities.

When planning an event, take into consideration that in certain times the dialogue partner may not be able to meet. Each faith has its own religious holidays and weekly ceremonies.

For example:

- Muslims have their congregational prayer on Friday around noon / in the afternoon, and it is called Jumma;
- Christians consider Sunday as a holy day and day of rest.

It is also essential to consider that some time of the year religious holidays give certain rules on behavior. It is important to know them as this will prevent from potential misunderstandings.

Pre workshop questionnaire

Before the workshop begins, it is a good idea to give the participants a pre-training questionnaire to determine what they anticipate the workshop to be about. During the final evaluation of the workshop, the facilitator should find out if the workshop has met their expectations.

Time and place for worship

Planning an agenda for the meeting and ensuring a special time is allocated in the program for prayers. It is always useful to consult with religious groups on their calendars as the time of the prayers may vary throughout the year and are dependent on local latitude. But also (as explained in chapter above) special weekdays are dedicated for religious celebrations.

Participants will appreciate it if a room is designated for prayers and reflection. It should be a room where no other activities or exercises take place. The most preferable location would have plain decoration, a clean and quiet room, which will facilitate essential elements for worship.

You should bear in mind that decorating the room with religious symbols might cause people of other religions upset and they then may not feel comfortable to use this place for their own prayers.

Some practical arrangements might be also useful, i.e. find out what the direction of Mecca and Jerusalem are from this room, as Muslims must be facing Mecca during their prayers

Also note that Muslims pray respectively five and three times a day. The

times vary dependant on the time of year and on the time of sunrise and sunset.

Dietary requirements

When preparing an activity, special consideration also needs to be paid to dietary restrictions.

Many religions forbid certain food items, have strict requirements about how food should be prepared or have special dietary practices that must be observed. Adhering to these guidelines, will prove respect to the followers of these religions. Violation of their dietary requirements which are based on religious beliefs and/or traditions may be perceived as a challenge to their faith - and can impact negatively on the atmosphere of the meeting.

However the most important thing is to know these restrictions and requirements on a daily basis. In order to avoid organizing an activity on a special religious holiday, just consult the calendar of religious festivals. Below several useful tips regarding special religious dietary needs are presented:

Muslim Dietary Practices:

Food that is permissible according to Islamic law is called *Halal* (lawful). In order to be called *halal*, the food should receive special certification. However, several items are clearly prohibited when organizing an activity with Muslims. It sometimes might be easier not to provide the forbidden substances, than looking for certified *halal* food, which may be expensive and hard to find for one who does not know where to look for it.

Islam prohibits Muslims from consuming any of the following items:

- Alcohol. This includes alcoholic beverages such as wine and liquor, as well as any food items that contain alcohol. Islam forbids the use of any mind-altering substances, whether in the form of food, drink or smoking. Muslims believe that maintaining health, Allah's gift, requires mastering full control over one's mind, body and spirit at all times.

- Pork or any pig-based products, such as lard, ham and pepperoni but also gelatin and shortening. This includes consuming any food that contains these items in any concentration or amount.
- Blood. Raw meat must be soaked in water to drain out the blood before cooking. Muslims are permitted to eat only well-cooked meat where no trace of blood can be found after cooking.
- Animals and poultry slaughtered in a halal way must be slaughtered by cutting both the neck artery and vein to cause instant death and decrease animal suffering. The name of Allah must be mentioned during the slaughtering of the animal to bless it. Therefore, one should consider not serving meat in case the *halal* meat is not affordable.

There is a debate between Muslim authorities on the question of seafood - if it is *halal*.

Islam also forbids cooking, eating or drinking from any pans, dishes, cups or table utensils that were used to prepare food containing pork or alcohol. They cannot be used to prepare or serve food for Muslims until they are thoroughly washed. Therefore, when serving food one should consider using plastic plates and cutlery.

Islam also stresses certain hygienic measures such as washing hands before and after eating, and cleaning the teeth frequently. A Muslim who has eaten onions will pray at home, rather than in the mosque, so as not to offend others and the angels.

During several special periods in year such as festivities, Muslims have some special restrictions. For example during Ramadan, Muslims are not allowed to eat nor drink from sunrise until sunset. Then they can eat and drink and traditionally these evening meals are celebrated with family and friends. The month of Ramadan closes with a special feast.

Christian Dietary Practices:

In opposition to Muslim traditions, Christians don't have a list of products that they can or should not eat. However there are some dietary restric-

tions also in Christian tradition. It all varies on the national culture and denomination, but for example some Catholics fast on Fridays to commemorate the suffering of Jesus, who died on Friday at the cross. In this case fasting would mean not eating meat (perhaps eating fish instead).

There are specific conditions when this tradition is not required to be followed, e.g. for children, pregnant women and the elderly, in times of illness or while travelling. Other periods of fasting include Lent (before Easter) or Advent (before Christmas), but the practice differs from one Christian denomination to another.

Hindu dietary practices

“Having well considered the origin of flesh-foods and the cruelty of fettering and slaying corporeal beings, let man entirely abstain from eating flesh.”The Manusmrti (5.49)

When planning a workshop where Hindus are invited, it is important to know that most Hindus follow a balanced vegetarian diet. In the Mahabharata it explains *“meat-eating has a negative influence on existence, causing ignorance and disease.”* It explains, *“a healthy vegetarian diet is sattvic, i.e., under the influence of goodness, able to increase purity of consciousness and longevity.”*

Although some Hindus may occasionally eat meat, almost all avoid beef. In addition, strict practitioners also abstain from: garlic, onions, mushrooms, alcohol, tea and coffee (obtaining caffeine)

Food plays an important role in Hindu worship, and the food offered to

“Having well considered the origin of flesh-foods and the cruelty of fettering and slaying corporeal beings, let man entirely abstain from eating flesh.”The Manusmrti (5.49)

God (Prasada) is thought to bestow considerable religious merit, purifying body, mind and spirit. Taking Prasada that has been cooked and offered with devotion inclines the mind towards spirituality. Many Hindus have an altar at home and offer their food before eating.

Meat, fish, poultry, and eggs as they are usually considered *tamasic* (influenced by ignorance) and are not sanctioned by either the scriptures or saints. Almost all Hindus avoid beef out of respect for the cow. In the Mahabharata - a seminal Hindu epic - one of its central characters, *Bhishma*, declares that no sacrifices can be made without butter. And, thus, cows became essential to the spiritual life of Hindus. Alcohol, tea and coffee are said to pollute one's consciousness, making the practice of meditation difficult. Mushrooms are thought to take on the quality of ignorance, while garlic and onions take on the quality of *rajas* (passion).

Gender sensitivity

In order to ensure that women and men have an equal chance to not only attend but participate in an activity, organizers should pay attention to gender specific needs and issues.

There are many important elements that need to be considered in the preparation of an event.

One of those elements is travelling. In several religions, religious practices expect women (especially young girls) not to travel alone.

Thus a travel companion is required. This might be an important factor to consider when selecting participants and when making the travel arrangements. In order to provide both women and men the possibility to feel represented and have people to refer during the activity, gender balance should be sought within planning team, experts and participants.

Another important gender element in an activity is the empowerment of women. This can be done through the methodologies and spaces used within your activity if the question is taken into account. Ensuring balance between plenary and working groups is necessary, if it is observed that not everyone participates equally in the plenary sessions.

In some contexts, depending on the topic of discussion, you may well consider provision of space for work in gender differentiated groups, which can ensure that different genders get more actively involved.

In some cases it may not be wise to allow two people of different sexes staying alone in a room together during the meeting for extended periods of time. You should try to avoid such situations.

Gender neutral and sensitive language should be used throughout the activity in order to create an inclusive environment for both women and men.

Another aspect of gender sensitivity in IRD activities is the physical contact. The rules vary depending on the group. Some religious traditions have strict rules on what should not be done, referring mainly to male-female contact.

For example all kinds of hugging or kissing on the cheek (when greeting or saying good bye) between genders is not appropriate when dealing with Muslims. In some cases it may even extend to the offering of handshakes. This should be taken into consideration when planning icebreakers, energizers etc.

TO THE FACILITATOR:

Prepare



At present you are preparing to train others. As the adage goes, failure to plan (in this case prepare) is a plan to fail. Your preparedness will probably involve programming, allocating tasks, contingency planning, improving your teaching skills and collaborating with others. In addition, the more conscientious participants of the impending workshop will also be spending time getting ready for the training experience. Excellent preparation will lead to an effective workshop. Conversely, the authors have some grim mem-

ories where the opposite was certainly the case. With a little adaptation it will be possible to use the concept of training preparation as an example of the importance disaster preparedness.

Some tips on preparation:

Consider the learning points of the activity and prepare questions to trigger discussion.

Arrange the venue ahead of time to suit the activity, so that time is not lost on hanging signs, flipcharts or moving chairs.

If space permits, have the participants sit at tables which should be used for taking notes, completing handouts and for keeping their files or notebooks.

Keep your eye on the clock so that there is sufficient time for group sharing and discussion.

Remember that however interesting the activity would be, it is only in the processing of the experience that learning will take place.

Maintain Aims

In IRD training workshops, there is a need to maintain clear aims. These aims must be continually examined to see how they apply in a rapidly changing context.

Remain Flexible

In IRD training workshops, there is a need to be flexible to respond to new opportunities and emergent problems. There is an identical need in a responsive workshop.

Assess Needs

In IRD, there is always a need to assess the collective needs of the participating religious communities, and satisfy them as effectively as possible. The leader will also need to assess and monitor the individual needs of

each religious organization represented, as well as the individual needs of the participants and to adapt the training seminar to suit them, rather than expect them to passively ‘consume’ a pre-packaged product.

Promote Participatory Management

In IRD there is a need to establish a ‘bottom-up’ system of management, where the recipients of the training become actively involved. While still maintaining the leadership role of the facilitator, the participants can be involved in determining how topics for discussion are selected and taught through their own representatives. It is important to transfer ‘ownership’ of the training from the organizers to the participants, and this will only be achieved through their active involvement in various aspects of the workshop.

Methods of Training

Lecture

A formal presentation, given without much, if any, participation in the form of questions or discussions from the participants. Lectures can include the presentation of material by a variety of media, e.g., charts, slides or video extracts. a lecture could also be termed as a *Lecturette*, which is a structured and orderly presentation of information delivered by facilitator. It can be used to impart knowledge or introduce skills. A Lecturette which allows for an exchange between the facilitator and the participants is usually more effective.

Applications

For large groups, when a high degree of participation would not be possible

When a trainer wishes to present information or ideas



in a structured and uninterrupted format.

Useful when concepts can best be taught through exposition

For introducing the framework for studies carried out in reflective or experiential modes of learning *Advantages*

A large number of participants can be addressed by a single trainer

A large amount of material can be covered in a short time but not necessarily learnt!

Problems

Participants remain passive learners, since there is little or no opportunity for their participation

Information which is delivered mainly by talking is not easily assimilated or memorized

The trainer has little or no feedback from the participants as to how well they are receiving or understanding the material

The attention span of the average participant is often exhausted

Participants are easily distracted; someone can appear attentive, but who knows what fantasies are being played out behind the eyes?

Demonstration

As a sort of lecture, but where the main purpose is to practically illustrate a point of some kind- to teach a skill or conduct an experiment.

Applications

For showing participants correct or incorrect actions

For giving participants a standard to aim for, before they practice the skill themselves

Advantages

Large groups can be addressed at the same time



Participants demonstrating during the IRD training

The visual display and unfolding of a process can stimulate interest

Problems

Demands thorough preparation and takes time to produce

While the demonstration is being carried out there is usually little interaction with the participants

Often given too quickly and the material is too complex for the participants to absorb the essential information or procedures

With large groups, it is difficult for all the participants to observe the action closely enough.

Lesson

A talk that incorporates a variety of techniques for prompting participation and feedback. The participation might be in the form of questions raised by the trainer at the beginning of, or during, the session, questions initiated by the participants, or brief periods of discussion interspersed with the trainer's exposition.

Applications

For putting across information to groups of not more than 30 participants

For occasions where the main objectives are to do with the acquisition of knowledge and the concern is that the participants should be given the chance to debate, demonstrate their understanding or question the material that is being presented.

Advantages

The participation stimulates interest and enhances their learning.

To a certain extent, participants can receive individual attention

The trainer can get immediate feedback on his exposition

The interest can be aroused and maintained by changes of activity and changes of pace

Problems

Depends on a high level of skill on the part of the trainer, particularly with mature and experienced participants

Care has to be taken not to replicate the stereotypical “schoolroom” situation, where the participants feel that the main purpose is to test them

Project

A practical task for the participants to carry out, either individually or in a group. They are given guidelines to follow, but a good deal of latitude is left to the initiative of the participants as to how they will meet the objective.

Applications

Effective when training objective includes having participants work together in closer proximity, and personal “barriers” need to be broken

Advantages

The responsibility for learning is taken by the participants themselves

Work on a project can be self-paced and carried out at any convenient time

Very useful for stimulating initiative and creativity

Provides feedback on a wide range of personal qualities, knowledge and attitudes.

Problems

Needs careful planning and attention by the trainer so that the motivation of the participants does not fall away

Essential that the project be planned in consultation with the participants, since it must be seen as directly relevant to their context

Supervised practice

Participants are engaged in their normal work tasks but they are asked to monitor what they are doing in a structured and in a thorough way. What they are doing is regularly supervised by the trainer.

Applications

When the schedule is flexible enough to allow for periods of outdoor work, and the distance between the training centre and the communities where the participants are working are not too great to cause insurmountable logistic problems

Advantages

Participants are actively engaged in the functions for which they are being trained, and, therefore, the relevancy factor is very high

When participants are able to work in small groups, there is a valuable interchange of experience and ideas

Makes a crucial link between what is being learnt and discussed in the training centre and its application in the field

Unless guidelines for the field practice are carefully set and the supervision is regular, the participants might not be stretched beyond what they normally do in their routine work

To establish an effective system of supervision is expensive in terms of the trainer's time.

Tutorial

A one-on-one situation, where the trainer sits in discussion with a participant.

Applications

Discussing a particular request/task completed by the participant

Reviewing the participant's progress or any problems that arise during the workshop of training

Advantages

The participant has the undivided attention of the trainer

The most concentrated and focused method of achieving feedbacks, both ways

Some participants will find it much easier to reveal their anxieties or problems in such a tutorial than in the arena of a group

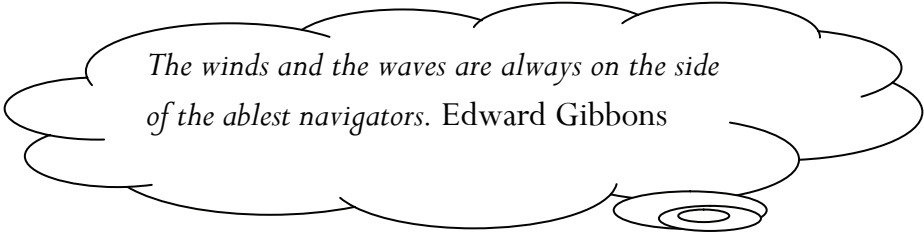
Problems

Expensive in trainers' time and usually only possible when the training group is small or the staff team large.

Role-Play, Simulation and Games

Role plays are short dramas in which participants can experience how someone might feel in a situation, try out a new skill, and learn from each other. Role playing in small groups or pairs is less threatening for participants and allows more people a chance to do it. The facilitator should ask

for volunteers as many people are embarrassed or uncomfortable acting in front of a large group. After the role play, he/she should be declare the role play over, and ask questions about it. Participants are made to act out, in a controlled training situation, the roles they take or encounter in their work. The three methods may be seen as three increasingly elaborate versions of the same basic process-a way of learning through being involved in a situation, usually one which occurs in real life, but with some of the real-time intervals and non-essential details missed out.



The winds and the waves are always on the side of the ablest navigators. Edward Gibbons

There is also a link with case studies. These can simply be presented to the group for discussion, but role-playing takes the process of a stage further, participants acting out improvised roles from the case study. Such a role-play becomes a simulation when it is carried out continuously and intensively over a period of time, using fairly elaborate printed or audiovisual materials. It becomes a game when there is an element of “competition”, individuals or teams being one set against one another to see how successfully they a particular task or solve a problem.

Applications

For practice in the face-to-face situations encountered in the participants’ own environment

To develop a sharp understanding of issues raised in case studies

For increasing knowledge of and sensitivity towards human interaction

For changing/modifying attitudes and developing interpersonal skills

Advantages

Participants can practice skills and receive the trainer’s and their colleagues’ advice and criticism in a “safe” training situation

Creates the “feel” of real life problems

Arouses keen interest

Allows for attention to emotional factors in interpersonal encounters

Problems

Unless the role-plays are well chosen and sensitively managed, there is a risk that participants will be tested in situations where they “lose face” and their confidence can then be reduced

Unless tasks are assigned to observers they are reduced to being merely onlookers

Techniques for Generating and Conducting a Role Play

A situation for role-play can arise from group discussion. These are the stages in identifying a suitable dramatic incident and structuring a role-play that relates closely to work problems encountered by participants:

Engage the group in a discussion of common communication problems faced in carrying out a particular function.

When a few experiences have been recounted, suggest that a scenario can be constructed that combines the key elements of what has been described.

On a board or flipchart, build up details of a character or characters and a significant incident using ideas that come from the group. (It is advisable to make this fictional, rather than use an incident the participants have experienced. This avoids the potential confusion between the role-play and reality the comments like: “But he wasn’t really that sort of a person!” or “It did not turn out quite like that!”)

When enough details of the character(s) have been built up with information such as job description, responsibilities, lines of communicating and accountability with other roles, resources available-the kind of information that will be known to project staff-break off and divide the group

into clusters that will identify with one of the characters involved.

Ask each cluster to build a model-using any objects lying around-representative of how its character perceives and feels about his or her situation.



Participants during an IRD training session in Garissa 2011.

After about 20 minutes, ask for a volunteer from each cluster to act out the role of the person the cluster has identified with.

Begin the role-play of the anticipated meeting between the character(s) and the project officer

At a significant moment-when resolution comes or the conflict seems irreconcilable-stop the role-play and ask the players, still in role, about their feelings at that particular point

Direct the players to disassociate themselves from their roles and engage the whole group in a discussion of what has occurred in the role-play-moving from a reflection of the incident itself to the general lessons that can be drawn from it.

If it seems appropriate and productive, return to the role-play with different participants.

Discuss the differences between the two approaches.

Return to the models (which should, ideally, have been built in different rooms) and ask each cluster to describe the feelings, motivations and expectations that were being identified before the actual meeting took place.

Workshop Planning Checklist

Work through this checklist at the outset of planning a workshop so as to be fully prepared for the workshop.

Discussion points

Ending activities with discussion points helps the facilitator to assess and reinforce learning. The participants can be helped to process what they have learnt by asking them what they have experienced during the activity. This also provides an opportunity for anyone to raise a concern or a question. Processing may include repeating or summarizing some of what was said and, as the activity is ending, drawing the group's attention to key points and issues. The following questions might be useful to guide a discussion point.

What did we just do?

Why? What was the objective?

How did feel about this activity?

What did you learn?

Do you still have any questions?

Did you learn anything new?

What can we do to improve this activity?

Points to remember

We learn better if we want to learn.

We learn better through experience.

We learn better through reinforcement.

We learn better through summary and revision.

We learn better through participating in the learning.

Teaching Aids Checklist

Flipchart

Felt pens

Overhead Projector (if required)

Extension Lead

Screen for Projection

Overhead Projector Pens

Overhead Projector Transparencies

Slide Projector (if required)

Video Player and Monitor (if required)

Clipboard

Scissors

Transparent tape

Paper and pens

Name badges for participants

Copies of Timetable

Copies of list of participants with organizations and addresses

Copies of Evaluation Forms

Copies of Certificate

Access to photocopier and computer with printer (if required and feasible)

Defining Aims of Training Workshops

If you don't know where you are going you will probably end up somewhere else.

Anon

The first in design (of a workshop) is to translate goals into outcomes of information, behavior or attitudes.

John W. Loughery and Barrie Hopson.

Overall aims and specific objectives for a training workshop need to be:

- Precisely defined
- Realistic, attainable within the duration and constraints of the workshop
- Carefully related to the individual needs and requirements of participants
- A balance between general and specific issues (this concerns the need to cover macro issues to provide the essential global, political attention to the everyday tasks of IRD that may be specifically related to the local situation.)
- Divided into specific objectives for the development of knowledge, skills and attitude

Generally acceptable to all involved. i.e. sponsoring religious organizations, funding groups, organizers, the management team and the participants

Carefully monitored and evaluated during and after training

It will also be important to break these aims down into primary and secondary objectives so that leaders and participants are in no doubt as to the main objectives, which are not missed in the desire to satisfy less significant aims.

The following general objectives may form a useful basis for a definition

of aims for a training workshop. There should also, however, be specific local aims that will need to be added since certain training programs are established to focus on precise requirements.

It is important to recognize that in a short training workshop, the primary focus should always be on sharing **Knowledge**, with a secondary concern to learn about developing **Attitudes** and if opportunity presents itself and time allows, **skills** can be developed.

Within a short workshop however, there will not be adequate time available to teach and test the acquired knowledge in any depth since many can take years to acquire. Therefore the aims that follow have been selected on the assumption that a workshop will only last for the stipulated duration with limited objectives. Five of the following aims relate to the growth of knowledge, four to the development of attitudes and three to the development of skills.

1. Stimulate curiosity and a desire to learn

The one real object of Education (Training) is to leave a man in the condition of continually asking questions.

Bishop Creighton, 1843-1901

The art of teaching is the art of assisting discovery.

Mark Van Doreen, 1894-1914

A well constructed workshop can create a powerful appetite for knowledge. This process occurs as participants learn how to relate their own experience of the subjects being studied to a wider spectrum of understanding.

If subjects are covered in a manner that challenges long established pre-conceptions this can result in questioning the process that is an essential prelude to the development of new approaches and policy developments.

The implications are:

Firstly, a concern to use very competent facilitators who are able to communicate and inspire and are well informed on the subject matter, preferably with first-hand experience.

Secondly, a further implication relates to the necessity of a careful selection of participants

2. Facilitate the sharing of knowledge between participants

Experience indicates that some of the most effective learning in training workshops is horizontal- where knowledge is transferred between participants, as opposed to being confined to the vertical flow of knowledge from the instructor to participant.

The biggest enemy to learning is the talking teacher-John Holt

The implications are:

Firstly, to structure the program to enable the participants to communicate through social events, group exercises and individual contributions.

Secondly, there is a need to assemble the participants in the manner of a theatrical production to cover varieties of gender, age, religion, etc. If a workshop can be 'cast' in this balanced manner (it is recognized that it is a rare opportunity), there is a high level of certainty that valuable mutual learning will take place.

Impact accurate, relevant information that relates to the different faiths and their practices

Training that is directed towards religious leaders has to achieve credibility and be authoritative. It is vital that doctrinally accurate information is conveyed as opposed to knowledge merely based on opinion and prejudice, or a repetition of stereotypes.

The implication is to avoid a narrowly based approach of training. The

scope of the program should be sufficiently broad to embrace varied Faiths and doctrinal beliefs.

Enable all participants to obtain knowledge about other faiths, to be aware of the location of useful information on the varied aspects of IRD

Knowledge is of two kinds; we know a subject ourselves, or we know where we can find information upon it.

Samuel Johnson 1709-1784

This knowledge will need to concern the availability of accurate knowledge about other religions as contained in their scriptures, religious commentaries, reports, films, videos, or historical archives,

The implications are:

Firstly, to conduct a resource inventory to determine what is available within your context and how it can be used.

Secondly, to conduct a similar search but on an wider scope

Meet the individual need of each participant to enable a more effective IRD workshop

“The teacher if he is indeed wise does not bid you to enter the house of his wisdom but leads you to the threshold of your mind”Kahlil Gibran 1883-1931

The implications are:

Firstly, that a careful analysis of the specific needs of each person, bearing in mind their religious and doctrinal inclinations and rituals e.g. prayer times, forbidden foods e.t.c. will be needed both before and at the outset of the training workshop

Secondly, a flexible workshop structure will be necessary to adapt it to suit specific individual religious needs. A particularly useful device will

be for each participant to be given the opportunity to undertake a work request/task that relates to their religious requirements.

Develop basic management skills

Though the basic motivation of the workshop participants is to enhance their knowledge about IRD, a subtle balance has to be maintained here.

On one hand, it is important to recognize that there will be incidents of participants coming to the training who have had prior experience in IRD, and the facilitator would be wise to allow such to bring out their experiences in to the meeting, as this would enhance the sessions by moving them away from being purely theoretical.

On the other hand, it is the author's experience of many workshops that there are always a large number of participants attending with no previous experience of IRD, so there is need to find a balance that would be inclusive to both sets of participants.

Learning is not a spectator sport-Anonymous

The more active the participant, the more effective the training-Anonymous

Develop decision-making/problem solving skills

This can be achieved by creatively expanding each participant's ability to receive information, analyze it, and resolve a problem without infringing on their religious belief.

Encourage and establish an environment that will facilitate the construction of a group that can look beyond historical prejudice and operate effectively together as a team

People acting together as a group can accomplish things which no individual acting alone could ever hope to bring out.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt 1886-1945

Dialogue in general can never be an individual pursuit; rather it takes place

within an integrated team situation where the participants are gradually brought together and made to see the value in receiving information, advice, analysis, mutual understanding and encouragement without suspicion.

The implication here is to regard the participants in a training workshop as a disparate group of individuals who, through their contact with each other in formal and informal settings, as well as through a series of exercises, are able to develop mutual understanding. This can enable them to act together on political and economic and social issues for the benefit of the religious organizations they represent and the society at large.

Face ethical dilemmas that arise as consequences of diverse dogmatic/doctrinal positions

Decisions that are made while maintaining an apologetic or doctrinal position have significant ethical consequences on various groups.

The implication is to candidly and maturely discuss these issues and dilemmas that pose such moral issues, in order to heighten awareness of ethical choices and consequences, while pursuing spiritualism rather than encourage doctrinal “apologetics”, which lays emphasis on dogmatic contradictions and focuses on rigid liturgies and immovable traditional positions. It would be helpful for the trainer to shy away from any such discussions.

Strengthen commitment to effective IRD, to encourage a social concern to meet the needs of the diverse religious organization represented.

It is inevitable that a minority of workshop participants will arrive at training workshops in a casual (perhaps even frivolous) frame of mind. Sometimes these attitudes reflect their previous experience and personality types, or they can result from them being ‘drafted’ as unwilling participants. Whatever the cause, these attitudes are expressed as a lack of commitment to the workshop, a lack of motivation to their request/tasks and, on rare occasions, even an apparent low concern for the needs of the other workshop participants.

The implications are:

Firstly, to watch for symptoms of this outlook while selecting the participants

Secondly, to communicate the need for commitment and dedication by the example of all the facilitating team, and by creating an environment where the overall group is able to exercise its authority over members

You cannot teach a man anything, you can only help him discover it for himself.

The Experiential Learning Cycle

You cannot teach a man anything, you can only help him discover it for himself.

Galileo Galilei 1564-1642

Experiential learning

One of the tested and proven ways to make a training session or a workshop successful is to involve the participants in their own learning. The greatest benefit of using this approach is in how much the facilitator and the participants can learn from each other's practical experiences.

Activities in this kind of workshop should be designed to help the participants gain information, examine their own attitudes and practice skills. The facilitator for structured exercises in which learners do something, then process the experience together, generalizing about what they learned and ideally attempting to apply it to past/current/future situations.

Experiential learning is participant centered and the role of the facilitator is to create/simulate a situation/discussion that will make the group "see" themselves and grasp the learning points for themselves, and then bring them out in discussions.

I hear and I forget,

I see and I remember,

I do and I understand.

Confucius

An example of the cycle is as follows:

The authors **EXPERIENCED** ethnically instigated violence. This caused them and their colleagues to rapidly vacate the area they were working in. They **DESCRIBED** the event to various people and realized that their experience left much to be desired. For example, they reflected that it was decidedly unwise of one of them to stand and argue with the rowdy youths or take pictures of them during a confrontation. This could have cost him his life.

ANALYSIS then followed concerning the best ways to avoid the same scenario happening again in the future.

GENERALISATION then took place to comment on this need to have people of different tribes or religious persuasions live together in a modern society. Another realization came as the authors recalled that similarly irrational behavior is common practice in an election year.

Thus there was a consequent need to relate this awareness to the authors' '**ACTION PLANS**' in developing public awareness programs and civic education, as well as individual attitude change campaigns to avoid a possible future event, e.g. 'change begins with me.'

It is worth noticing that this sequence might relate to the experience of both trainers and participants are likely to gain in the forthcoming workshop. The cycle may not always start with experience, it may originate with the process of generalizing (academics often start here) or the action plan may commence a learning cycle (the start of many entrepreneurs' 'learning experience' of wealth, is bankruptcy!).

Anticipating and addressing training problems

Preparation by Participants

Problem

The failure of participants to prepare for the training workshop (i.e. to read pre-reading request/tasks or bring required material to the workshop, such as case study material scriptures, photographs, sit-reps, press-cuttings etc)

Solutions

It is vital that participants are informed of their selection in sufficient time for them to prepare and delegate work to others, with time being made available, by their religious organizations (outside of their normal worship program) to enable them to prepare fully for the workshop.

Detailed information must be sent to participants well before the workshop starts to familiarize them with the leader's expectations of them.

Selection of Participants with the Wrong Level of Experience

Problems

The selection of the participants with an incorrect level of experience and ranking (possibly too high or too low) to match the focus of the workshop. Mixing of participants with very different levels of experience and involvement in religious matters.

Solutions

Very careful procedures need to be adopted for the selection of participants, with precise information being gathered on their leadership position and level of experience.

Careful examination of the needs of participants prior to the workshop, with further confirmation of these needs through interviews at the outset of the training program.

Motivation to Learn

Problems

A failure of participants to work energetically within the program and display serious commitment to the subject or the workshop. The symptoms of this lack of enthusiasm are unpunctuality, absenteeism, attempts to vacate session's early, cynicism, lack of cooperation with workshop leaders, failure to complete request/tasks, etc.

Solutions

Participatory training puts the responsibility for learning directly on the shoulders of the participants, telling them that learning will not occur unless they accept that responsibility.

Water and Sanitation for Health Project (WASH) 1990

Discontented attitudes often derive from a participant having a fringe involvement with the subject in their position in the religious organizations they represent. Further causes may stem from them being a reluctant student, having being obliged to attend the workshop by their religious leader e.g. Pastor/Imam. Language barriers and 'cultural discordance' may be other causes of discontent.

The solutions to the above problems are, firstly, the need for improved selection of participants to make certain that each workshop has been designed to be appropriate for its focused audience and, secondly, careful briefing of religious organizations never to sent a reluctant member to a training workshop.

However, facilitators must recognize that the problem of poor motivation in the attitudes of participants may reside with themselves since they may have developed a workshop which fails to capture the participants' imaginations.

At an even more fundamental level, however, the facilitator may have a fixed agenda into which he or she wishes to fit the participants instead of

determining their needs and designing the workshop accordingly. *Your own aims may not relate to what the learner wants. Check them out at the start and from time to time during the workshop*-David Gauchos

Not only will careful thought about your students help determine the starting point of the workshop, but it will help shape the workshop itself. It will help determine which examples are most likely to fit, what vocabulary to use, and even what instructional media and procedures to adopt...If you spend a tenth as much time thinking about and describing your students as you do thinking about your subject, you will develop a powerful tool for ensuring the effectiveness of your instruction-Robert Mager

Problems may arise from a lack of clarity concerning the expectations of the workshop participants.

A further problem that reduces motivation may be an unfamiliar mode of presentation that a participant finds very difficult to relate to.

The solution here may be for the facilitator to make a special comment at the outset where he or she invites the visiting participants to what will undoubtedly be 'an unfamiliar form of training experience.

At the start of a training workshop, a very careful briefing is needed which should cover learning processes, the need for participants to share their problems and experiences of IRD with each other, leader's expectations vs. participants' expectations, the avoidance of distractions, etc.

Motivation grows from an exciting, relevant training that relates very closely to participants' interests, needs and opportunities within their faiths. Private talks would be viewed as a very useful way for leaders and each participant to establish these individual needs. Coaching, and the 'teaming' of participants into working groups can encourage mutual support, leading to better results

Distractions to learning – Finance

Problems

In many workshops participants develop a preoccupation with financial matters (i.e. maximizing per diem payments, seeking relocation to cheaper accommodation, etc.), rather than concentrating on the learning process.

This problem is particularly relevant to situations when participants attend workshops where per diem allowances for meals and accommodation may be well in excess of their normal daily income levels, and they can understandably regard the workshop as an 'income opportunity.'

Solutions

-Financial distractions are not easy to remove other than by noting the problem in the briefing sessions with very firm statements that participants will attend all sessions as an integral part of the learning process, and that the leaders will not agree to unnecessary distraction. Public and private briefing of participants should emphasize the need for them to not view the workshop merely as an income supplement.

-However, leaders need to be sensitive to the situation of participants coming from very poor backgrounds with low incomes and therefore make certain that workshop allowances are adequate and available when the money is needed.

-In situations where the problem persists, and is clearly interfering with the training program it is wise for leaders to set aside time to resolve each issue through private meetings with participants, or even a group session can help to ventilate a problem that is affecting several people. The key issue is to confront the problem rapidly, before it grows out of all proportion!

Distractions to Learning -Participant Problems

Problems

Distraction from the main business of the workshop can be caused by the demands of 'secondary agendas' with a participant's concentration. Typically, these include personal or family problems as well as the pressures of work, which are often increased by participating in the workshop.

Outside pressures can provoke a stream of interruptions including the need to answer telephone or text messages during the workshop, being pulled out of workshop sessions to talk to their employers and family. The distractions noted above are rarely confined to the person in question. Whilst they may start with one person, they rapidly become the concern of the entire group with an interactive program.

Solutions

Seek to obtain prior agreement with participants not to permit distractions to disturb their training; however this may only be forthcoming when the participant is fully committed to the value of the training program

There will be advantages in not running the workshop in the same town or city as the participating religious organizations, or in the premises of any participating organization. Rather, move it away from the place of worship and hold it out of town suitably remote from potential distractions as noted above.

For residential workshops, this will provide the opportunity for using evenings for casual learning, social events, workshop events, video films or free ranging discussions.

If the workshop is non-residential participants will have an opportunity to return home each evening in each other's company and provide them an opportunity to have informal conversations.

The authors recognize that this proposal carries a heavy price surcharge to cover the extras cost of accommodation and meals in hired places, but in our view this will prove to be money very well spent!

The problem of interruptions can be partly overcome if adequate free time is built into the program. Therefore generous time should be allowed for tea/coffee breaks (i.e. 30 minutes minimum), and lunch (60-90 minutes) to allow sufficient time for really urgent matters to be attended to without causing disruption.

Free time, as well as providing time to attend to extremely urgent matters is also essential as a way to facilitate contact between participants. Sufficient time should be given to digest material and undertake assigned tasks. If workshop facilitators ask participants to do these in their own time (i.e. during evenings and weekend breaks) their advice can be interpreted as placing a low priority of importance on such request/tasks

Coping With Arrogant Participants

Problems

Some participants may display over-confidence with the subject matter of a workshop, resulting in impatience with trainers and resource persons and a spirit of self-sufficiency, of not needing the training.

Solutions

This problem can grow out of participant's insecurity or frustration that the workshop is confined to what they regard as elementary issues with which they are familiar. If a participant is very experienced, the trainer should explain the need to share that wisdom and experience with those who may have less knowledge or whose expertise is different. One of the virtues of an interactive training experience is that those with wider knowledge and skills can be encouraged to contribute this to the group.

It must be remembered, however, that experienced participants are not in a training workshop merely to share their knowledge. It is essential that **all** participants learn during the program and this applies to those with experience as well as those new to the subject. There is always a danger 'stretching' the most experienced or brightest participants. (This is particularly true when they pose an uncomfortable threat to the leaders and other participants!)

This issue goes back to the selection process, to the need to secure participants that match the aims and level of the workshop.

Workshop Management Problems

(Planning Phase)

Selecting the Best Time to Hold the Workshop

Problems

Workshops are often badly timed in relationship to the participants' needs, or those of their religious organizations or in a relationship to learning opportunities. Typically they may occur:

During a fasting period

At a peak-time of religious activity (holidays etc.)

Solutions

The selection of the timing of a training workshop should be dictated by the following factors, set out in priority order:

Windows of Opportunity

Slack periods that do not conflict with religious activity peaks e.g. Easter and Christmas for the Christians,

Holiday Periods

It is to state the obvious that workshops should be timed to avoid festivals, religious fasts and public holiday periods. Since training is an activity that is costly and requires advance planning, it is imperative that money and efforts not be wasted by choosing the wrong time. Therefore, the above factors need to be very carefully considered before selecting the optimum time to hold a workshop.

i. Fixing the Size of the Workshop

Problems

Workshops can become much too large (i.e. over 25 persons). This may be

due to the organizers not being able to resist pressures to admit too many participants. Therefore, some training workshops begin to resemble major conferences, and are not effective learning experiences.

Conversely, workshops can be too small (i.e. fewer than 8 persons), where there are insufficient participants to promote a wide sharing of experiences.

Solutions

To some extent the size of a workshop is closely related to its function. Very small groups are needed for any development in skills since close supervision is needed. However, it is possible to handle much larger groups if the intention is to raise general awareness. As has already been noted in this guide, the purpose of general IRD workshops is normally to train and develop attitudes, skills and knowledge. The optimum size thus has to be a compromise to suit the different functions.

One of the most important initial tasks is to seek to weld together all the varied personalities into a single teaching/learning unit. This is likely to occur in a very natural manner if the workshop is not too large or too small (i.e. between 15 and 25 persons). With such numbers it is possible to devise a highly productive interactive program.

ii. Selection of Participants: Balancing Workshop Participants

This subject of participant selection has already been discussed in various places above. In addition to these issues there is a further matter to consider concerning the balance of a workshop.

Problems

Many workshops are limited in their effectiveness through their lack of balance in the participants (i.e. if all are of similar age; there are too many men and very few women; too many government staff and no NGO personnel; too many technical people; few staff with social responsibilities, etc.).

Solutions

The aim is to achieve equilibrium of workshop participants, in training programs where the organizers have the luxury of being able to select the

participants, therefore, it is essential to seek a careful balance between participants to suit the specific needs of a particular workshop being organized. This could relate to a

Balance of participants

Male and female

Older and younger participants

Balance of Experience

Experienced and inexperienced participants

Self-motivated and less motivated participants

iii. Creation of a Working/Learning Environment

I never teach my pupils, I only attempt to provide the conditions in which they can learn.

Albert Einstein

Problems

Many teaching/learning opportunities are lost due to hostile settings that actively prevent the growth of knowledge, skills and attitudes. The problem relates to Physical and Social/Psychological environments.

Physical Factors

Small overcrowded rooms for workshop

Lack of space for small group working

Poor furniture layout (i.e. no writing tables)

High noise levels (i.e. external traffic noise level, air conditioning fans)

Poor black-out facilities

Overcrowded participant study-bedrooms with no desks, etc., thus making private study difficult to impossible

An 'unloved, lifeless room' where leaders have failed to pin-up posters, maps, quotes, etc.

Social/Psychological Factors

An unfriendly, cold atmosphere with remote leaders, inaccessible to participants

A lack of freedom to express ideas

General vagueness over leader's expectations of participants

An uncreative atmosphere where 'risk-taking' is openly discouraged

A workshop that is filled with an endless procession of lectures with minimal opportunity for participants to contribute in an active manner to proceedings

Solutions

The precise opposite of each of the above problems.

Consider the training environment with great care.

THE LOVING T.O.U.C.H. OF TRAINING

TRUST: each other to be doing everything possible to support everyone else in the group.

OPENNESS: to open our hearts and minds to the group and the opportunity to learn

UNDERSTANDING: to treat everyone's comments with a kind and understanding attitude. Even when we don't agree, we should try to understand.

CONFIDENTIALITY: what we do, it stays here in this place and time.

HONESTY: to say what we mean, and to mean what we say. **Trevor Bentley 'The Business of Training,' 1990**

ANNEX

1. Summary of the Religions

OVERVIEW OF THE WORLD RELIGIONS FEATURED IN THE MANUAL

Summary on Christianity

Christianity developed out of Judaism in the 1st century C.E. It is founded on the life, teachings, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and those who follow him are called “Christians.” The three major branches of Christianity are Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and Protestantism, with numerous subcategories within each of these branches. Christianity has spread to every continent and is now the largest religion in the world.

The Christian belief includes the message of Love for all and the belief in the one and only true God, who is one being and exists as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and the belief that Jesus is the divine and human Messiah sent to save the world.

The sacred text of Christianity is the Bible, including both the Hebrew Scriptures (also known as the Old Testament) and the New Testament. Central to Christian practice is the gathering at churches for worship, fellowship, and study, and engagement with the world through evangelism and social action.

Summary on Islam

Islam is a monotheistic religious tradition that developed in the Middle East in the 7th century CE. Islam, which literally means “surrender” or “submission,” was founded on the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad as an expression of surrender to the will of Allah.

The Qur’an, the sacred text of Islam, contains the teachings of the Prophet that were revealed to him from Allah. Essential to Islam is the belief that Allah is the one and true God with no partner or equal. Islam has several branches and much variety within those branches. The two divisions

within the tradition are the Sunni and Shi'a, each of which claims different means of maintaining religious authority. One of the unifying characteristics of Islam is the Five Pillars, the fundamental practices of Islam. These five practices include a ritual profession of faith, ritual prayer, the zakat (charity), fasting, and the hajj (a pilgrimage to Mecca).

Summary of Hinduism

Hinduism is a collective term applied to the many philosophical and religious traditions native to India. Hinduism has neither a specific moment of origin nor a specific founder. Rather, the tradition understands itself to be timeless, having always existed.

Its collection of sacred texts is known, as a Bhagavad - Gita, Isha Upanishad there are also as a whole known as, as Sanatana Dharma, "The Eternal Teaching." It is thus a complex tradition that encompasses numerous inter-related religious doctrines and practices that have some common characteristics but which lack any unified system of beliefs and practices.

The Hindu world view is grounded in the doctrines of samsara (the cycle of rebirth) and karma (the universal law of cause and effect), and fundamentally holds that one's actions (including one's thoughts) directly determine one's life, both one's current life and one's future lives

The tradition is typically divided into four major sects: Shaiva (devotees of the god Shiva), Vaishnava (devotees of the god Vishnu), Shakta (devotees of the goddess), and Smarta (those who understand the ultimate form of the divine to be abstract and all encompassing, Brahman).

Short summary of Baha'i Faith

The Baha'i Faith was founded in the mid-19th century in Iran. In 1844 Siyyid 'Ali Mohammad, a Shi'ite Muslim, proclaimed that he was "the Bab," "the Gate," an interpreter of the Quran with special religious insight and prophetic abilities; he was the "Hidden Imam."

The Bab's prophetic message spread in Iran, which angered both the government and the Shi'ite leadership and he was arrested and then executed.

One of the Bab's disciples, Mirza Hoseyn 'Ali Nuri, known as Baha'u'llah, spread the Bab's teachings; these teachings eventually evolved into the Baha'i faith, and it is Baha'u'llah who is most typically known as the founder of the tradition. Baha'i propounds that God is utterly transcendent and ultimately unknowable to humanity.

God's manifestation is understood in Baha'i to come not just through the Bab and Baha'u'llah, but also through the world's religious prophets, including Abraham, Moses, the Buddha, Krishna, and Mohammed. Baha'i Faith sacred literature includes the writings and oral history of the Bab and Baha'u'llah. The Baha'i Faith members do not have any clergy; all spiritual authority is held by local and national councils called "Spiritual Assemblies." Baha'i Faith is open to all who accept the teachings of Baha'u'llah.

Baha'i Faith religious practices and rituals include daily prayer and devotions. Baha'i Faith followers are expected to fast for nineteen days a year and participate in the Nineteen Day Feast. Essential Baha'i Faith theological tenets include the unity of humanity and the unity of all religions with the ultimate goal of creating a unified humanity without racial, ethnic, class, or religious prejudice.

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