

2015



Asher Nazir

Annual Report

COPE PAKISTAN



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Executive Summary

Interfaith Harmony & Peace program launched a set of different activities as a campaign for interfaith harmony & peace with likeminded organizations, institutions and diverse communities. These programs were implemented in the district of Okara.

COPE Pakistan conducted Eid Milan parties and Christmas get-togethers to bring them on one platform. This was to make known the existence of several other religions, to raise the sense of respect, and to give value to the traditions and customs of others as well. Thus, the environment of tolerance and acceptance for the other is taking place. The attitude of forbearance is beginning to flourish and in many cases, it has been observed that many peace committees and peace councils have come up to work for peace and harmony.

Peace Essays/Speech & Peace drawings competition for children have also been designed, planned and is being implemented. The spirit of children regarding this activity has been encouraged so that they may become the ambassadors of peace and harmony for friends in their schools.

Another channel for the interfaith and peace building “Skill Training Education Centers” have also been established in the target area to promote peace and harmony at a grassroots level among people of diverse faiths. The women of diverse faiths are keen to take admission in the center in order to learn skills, and at the same time they are equipping themselves to work for interfaith harmony and peace in their villages, locality, families, and surroundings.

The ultimate purpose of taking these initiatives is to bring the people of different faiths closer to each other. So as a result, these efforts have begun to bring fruit and the communities are getting ready to stand with one another. Various activities have given soul to this work. Peace rallies, seminars, Iftar parties, celebrations of religious events as Eid, Christmas get-togethers, and related activities have paved a way for communities to break the barriers of hate and indifference; rather they are giving a certain respect to the values and customs of one another. We are certainly hopeful to form and create a peaceful society.

GOAL

Culture of co-existence along with diversity of religions.

Objectives

- Unskilled and jobless females of diverse faiths will have developed different skills along with that, an understanding of religious tolerance and respect in District of Okara Pakistan.
- Religious leaders of different faiths will developed an understanding of religious tolerance and respecting each other's faith in Okara District.
- Need & importance of peace and social harmony developed among students to play their vital role in promoting of interfaith harmony among their fellow students of different faiths.

Religious Festivals Celebration

In order to provide a platform for social and religious harmony among people of different faiths and sects, an Eid Milan party, Iftar party, and Christmas party got together to celebrate. For the promotion of peace and interfaith harmony, COPE Pakistan organized different programs with the collaboration of different stakeholders. Leaders of religions and politics, as well as intellectuals and elected representatives, were brought together on one platform. They all expressed their views about how harmony and peace can flourish in society in order to reduce the element of societal unrest that is increasing with the passage of time.

Invitations in black and white were extended to the prominent and influential members of society. The main objective of celebrating different religious festivals was to provide an opportunity for people of different faiths to fill the gaps found among people on the basis of religion, cultural and social differences, and on the basis of minority and majority. These events were really a source of inspiration for the different people with different cultural backgrounds. From this platform, all the speakers, facilitators, and moderators conveyed messages of peace, justice, and love in accordance with their religious backgrounds.

The result of these programs was that the people who participated were motivated to promote the element of social and religious harmony; this includes peace. Most of the religious leaders made efforts to translate the concept, philosophy, and notion of harmony into their practical life. Similarly, Muslim friends shared their joy and happiness with Christians by presenting food packages for the needy and deserving Christians at the season of

Christmas. They also sent meat packages as a token of love from their side for the groups who are really poor and can only feed their families nutrient-rich food like meat once in a blue moon. So these are immediate outcomes of the interfaith harmony program. It will leave a long-term impact on society; that is, people will live in a peaceful situation with an element of tolerance. People will not just fight for their religion, but will translate the golden teachings of their religions into practical lives. This will bring people onto one page in spite of their religious differences.

Peace & Youth

Youth training workshop for the promotion of Peace

“If we are to reach real peace in the world, we shall have to begin with the children”
Peace is a wide concept that deals with the deepest roots of our being human and with the world at large. Since the earliest time of human history, peace has been conceived, practiced, contextualized and defined holistically and multi dimensionally. A simple clear and easy to understand way to thinking about peace was recently set.



The objective of this training is to work on promoting peace in Renala Khurd through Youth and children. It courage youth and children to see peace not only as relevant and urgent in our studying, how we relate to each other at home, at school, in our communities and the care for our mother, the earth, among other issues.

The goal is to encourage and enable youth to take responsibility for the profound impact, both negative and positive their action and decisions, however small they might seem to be, can have in all of those places. This training hopes to challenge youth and parents to link learning, responsibility and action as one whole, aimed at promoting peace.

Peace has always been the biggest idea of human beings and throughout human history we see human struggling to bring peace into their societies. Even today we see hundreds of institutions and movements working to promote peace in society. For this purpose providing a healthy and peaceful environment to society youth has always been considered important because in the absence of it their skills and abilities cannot flourish.

Topics for sharing:

1. Living Peace and Harmony
2. Peace begin with you: end violence
3. Environment in Peace building

Venue for this program was Anwar Shaheed Colony Renala Khurd Okara. Parish Priest Fr. James Siraj Din and Assistant Priest Fr.Nadeem John Shakir were also present in this workshop. So many young male and female were present with their parents and number of the total participants was 60.

Mr. Asher Nazir Coordinator COPE Pakistan welcomed to all young people, Children, Parents, Youth Trainer of URI Pakistan Ms.Tasneem Syed and Priests. With it he introduced to Ms.Tasneem Syed and gave a brief introduction of URI Pakistan. With it he congratulated to Fr. James Channan OP to receive the “Global Ambassador of Peace Award” from United Nation affiliated NGOs. Mr. Asher Nazir talked on the objectives of this training. He said that we have learned to fly in the air like birds and swim in the seas like fish but we have not learned the simple art of living together as brothers and sisters. In Pakistan you are well aware of the situation going around us. We have seen war, killing among different faiths, hatred within families, bomb blasting as every day we are hearing and watching. How much blood is shedding how much killing is going on. Do you think in this situation man can live peacefully and in harmony?

As Albert Einstein said, “Peace cannot be kept by force. It can only be achieved by understanding”

In the beginning of this training, children presented a peace song and this was a very beautiful and meaningful song.

Mr. Ehtesham Joseph gave a speech on peace and interfaith harmony. So in this speech he said that we want to go out in streets and parks without having fear of bombing and suicide attacks.

They do not like to live in under protection of guns; rather, they want to play games. Here we need to pray for peace. But we have to see that how I may be an Ambassador of Peace. When I love my fellows, I have the spirit of forgiveness for those who have done wrong to me. When I accept others as they are -- and all this I have to start first within myself, within my family, within society and in the whole nation -- then I can be an ambassador of peace.

Fr. Nadeem John Shakir, assistant Priest of Renala Khurd Parish, said that we have lost so much. Where does this situation lead us? What is our destination? Are we expecting more loss? What are our strategies getting new weapons to make path for third war?

What kind of legacy we are going to handover to our next generation? Will they take in their hands books or bullets? Can they hope for peace and prosperity or will they perish.

God's last creation was man and woman in his own image. Each person on earth is precious in God's sight. All of us are descendants of the same parents, Adam and Eva. This includes people whom we dislike the most. It includes our enemies. It is important to remember that no human life is outside of God's care. The general aim of this training is to develop awareness of diverse cultures and in doing so promote the development of positive attitudes in youth towards our ethnic diversity as one people.

Mother Teresa says, "If we have no Peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other."

Ms. Taseem Syed said that we live in a world where poverty, war, diseases, homeless are a stark reality. Often when we turn on our television we hear and see about violence, deaths, natural disasters, people shot in the streets. Violence due to race or politics. In our own schools, homes and communities there are issues of violence and injustice: domestic, ethnicity, poverty, hunger, etc. A teenager's sense of justice is strong. And young people want to know how they can make a difference in their world. But often young people don't know to do it, or where to begin. And too often, the adults in their lives do not provide them with healthy and strong examples of how to create fairness and justice in their world.

She gave a question for sharing to participants that when you face a big conflict as a community, then how you resolve it? Here participants shared different stories, and one story was very important: It was about the murder of Father George Ibrahim, a Roman Catholic priest from Renala Khurd parish. He was killed on 5 July 2003. He was born in Khushpur Punjab on 10 July 1964. He received his religious training at Christ the King Seminary Karachi and was ordained as a priest on 3 September 1993. Father George Ibrahim was shot dead by armed men who came into his parish Our Lady of Fatima in Renala Khurd Okara district in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Faisalabad. The funeral service of Fr. George Ibrahim was attended by more than 3,000 people, according to Bishop Joseph Coutts of Faisalabad. The Bishop said to the Christian community: We want justice and peace, and we will resolve this matter legally. If we come on the [violent] road then we have to face many problems. So, the Christian community agreed with the Bishop and we resolved this problem peacefully.

Concluding remarks

Mr. Asher Nazir CC Coordinator COPE Pakistan thanked Fr. Nadeem John Shakir and Fr. James Siraj Din with all participants and special thanked to Ms. Tasneem Syed Youth Trainer of URI

Pakistan who traveled from Islamabad to Okara for this training and gave a meaningful training to youth for the promotion of Peace in Renala Khurd Okara.

VISIT IN KOT RADA KISHAN IN KASUR DISTRICT WITH MS. FRIEDERIKE BOGE FROM PEACE CENTER LAHORE - PAKISTAN

NO MERCY FOR MURDERERS OF SHAHMA AND SHAHZAD

Friederike Boge is a German Journalist of (Frantfurter Allgemeine) and she paid a visit in Kot Rada Kishan on 19th January, 2015 with Mr. Asher Nazir (Executive Secretary Dominican Peace Center Lahore)



and CC Coordinator COPE Pakistan. She saw the brick factory where Shahma & Shahzad burnt alive by a Muslim mob.

In this visit she met different people (Christian and Muslim) and she asked about Shahma and Shahzad that why they burnt alive and what was the dispute between Shahzad and kiln owner Muhammad Yousaf Gujjar. On that place people told her about Shahma and Shahzad that they belong from a poor Christian family and worked at this kiln. Its owner locked up the couple and their three children over a wage

dispute. The next day, an announcement was made from two mosques that the couple had committed blasphemy. A crowd ran and beat up the couple, who pleaded innocence and begged for their lives. The barbaric act by fanatic Pakistani Muslims of burning alive a poor Christian couple is a crime against humanity. It's the worst crime in the history of Pakistan committed in the name of religion. It was triggered by the false Accusation of the burning of some pages of the Qurans.

In the last she went to Shahzad and Shagma house and met their family members and they were crying for Justice and demanding that no mercy for murderers.

Activities under taken:



- Reports of the carried out activities have been prepared, dispatched & maintained
- Meetings were held with influential community leaders this includes Parish team
- Integration and collaboration was made with likeminded organizations
- A committee of the local people have been established to manage the seminars
- Planned activities have been completed within given time
- The ratio of peoples participation in program was 100%
- Poor Christian poor patients get free medicines, costly tests for the cure of deadly and communicable diseases in the result integration and collaboration with other Organizations.
- Banner were prepared for the seminars
- News clips have been maintained at office
- Print & electric media gave coverage
- Event s photographs and video have been shared at URI web (www.uri.org)

COPE Pakistan firmly believes in collaboration and integration with other civil society organizations, political leaderships, intellectuals, Religious leaderships and all other influential people from different walks of life who may belong to diverse faiths and are with different backgrounds.

This has help a lot to make advocacy for the purpose of promoting of interfaith harmony and peace among people of this society and religions where so called leadership most of the time misuse and mislead the illiterate people by exploiting religious sentiments against each other.

They also quote verses passages and references from the religious books of their respective creed in order to promote and propagate the idea of peace, harmony to bring a society and nation at tone page for the purpose of bringing unity among the ranks of nations.

Women folks with special reference to mothers and female religious leaders who plays an important and vital role in the formation of youth have been encouraged to take part the seminars so that whatever they learned regarding the importance of peace, tolerance and promoting culture of co-existence could disseminate toward the people from their homes in addition to that from their religious seminaries a major platform responsible for the formation of society and community.

The intellectuals have also been invited to participate these seminars because they are the generally opinion makers in any civil society of the world. They are considered heroes of any society who's guidelines, facilitation and opinion is always given preference over the opinion expressed by the other sections of society.

Political leadership is very important especially the elected parliamentarian who are responsible and authorized to formulate, amend any existing laws in the country.

Skill Training Education Centers:

- Area profile was prepared and maintained for the record purposes
- Contents of the training prepared in consultation to trainers
- Integration and collaboration was made with likeminded organizations of Public & Private sectors
- Rules & regulation regarding the Skill Education Training have been formulated with the consultation of local people

Contents of the Sewing Training Center:

- Use of newspaper for tailoring purpose
- Different designs such as forks, shirts, blouse, skirts, trousers, pants etc.
- Stitching of ladies suits
- The copy drafting

Out comes / Achievements:

- Promotion of Peace and Interfaith harmony among different faiths.
- Accepting and giving respect to the faiths & beliefs of each other's

- Issues occur in the misconception of each other's s' believes being reduced and addressed at the local level
- Unskilled women being equipped with different skills to earn in a respectable way.
- There is an element of awareness regarding the need of interfaith harmony among participants (women, students, and youth, religious & political leadership).
- The element of networking has been further strengthened
- Electronic & Print media has given coverage to this program

Impacts



- Respect for each other's faith in the result of more understanding of each other's' faith
- Issues develop in the result of misconception of each other's s' believes will be reduced and addressed at the local level
- Unskilled women will be equipped with different skills to earn in a respectable way.

- Flow of information increasing with the passage of time about each other's faiths & beliefs among the parents as well, in the community members
- Youth will be able to show their hidden talents through different competitions

Challenges faced:



1. Still there are an elements of prejudices and hate redness among people in rural areas on account religious as, they don't accept food commodities and food items from Christian
2. They (Muslims) use hatred terminology for Christian like Kafir equal to pagan there is an hate ring word in Urdu; Chura, which means sweeper, because Christians are not allowed to run businesses like selling of meat, food items preparing sweets etc.

3. We have not funds for exposure to different religions religious places in Pakistan.



HOLI FESTIVAL IN LAHORE -PAKISTAN

Hindus residing in Pakistan also celebrate Holi, though, of course, in not as grand a fashion as seen in India. People celebrate the victory of good over evil forces by lighting bonfires called Holika. The tradition comes from the legend of Prahlad and Hiranyakashyap. In fact, people follow the same traditions and rituals



as in India due to their roots in India. People clean their houses and prepare special delicacies like gujias, papri and dahi badas. They meet up with friends and play with the colors, dance and generally have good

time. Hindus usually gather in temples and celebrate Holi there. Much gaiety can be seen in temples located in cities which have a comparatively greater Hindu population. Such as in Lahore and Sindh region. The celebration in Lahore is organized by the Government of Punjab with collaborations of other interfaith organizations. In the Holi celebrations at Krishna Mander Mr.Asher Nazir CC Coordinator COPE Pakistan and Mr.Yuel Bhatti CC Coordinator ABC for All were also present and they shared love and best wishes with Hindu



community in Lahore - Pakistan. CC Coordinator from Muslim, Hindu and Christian with URI Regional staff in URI Pakistan office in Lahore - Pakistan



CC Coordinator COPE Pakistan with Fr. James Channan OP (Regional Coordinator URI Pakistan) and leader of Sikh community in a Peace Conference in Lahore - Pakistan



We are giving food packets to Christian community in Christmas get together in Renala



Christmas get together with Muslims religious leaders and community in Renala Khurd



Mr.Asher Nazir (CC Coordinator COPE Pakistan) with Mr.Yuel Bhatti (Executive Secretary URI Pakistan and Mr.Derek Bernard in a seminar in Lahore.



Mr.Asher Nazir and Fr.James Channan OP in the program of International Day of Peace at Peace Center Lahore -Pakistan

URI National Conference at URI Pakistan Regional office in Lahore – Pakistan



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