



EIU Best Practices 2021

Fostering Intercultural Awareness through GCED

A Case from Sri Lanka

2021 EIU Best Practices Series No. 59 Fostering Intercultural Awareness through GCED



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APCEIU





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APCEIU

United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Asia-Pacific Centre of
Education for International Understanding
under the auspices of UNESCO

국제연합
교육과학문화기구

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Foreword

The Education for International Understanding (EIU)/Global Citizenship Education (GCED) Best Practices programme is one of APCEIU's efforts to share diverse experiences, practices, and approaches to bolster EIU and GCED which can inform and inspire education professionals who wish to design and implement policies, activities, and educational programmes on EIU and GCED. A total of 54 EIU Best Practices has been published and disseminated around the Asia-Pacific region and beyond since 2006. This year, Mr. Oshan Madushanka Gunathilake's case has been included with series number 59, focusing on providing the platform for positive dialogue among local youth changemakers.

In the past few years, APCEIU has encouraged the participants of its capacity-building programmes to share their experiences and stories of promoting EIU and GCED through these series. At the end of each training workshop organized by APCEIU, participants present their own action plans to implement EIU and GCED after returning home. This publication shows the continued commitment and endeavors of APCEIU's training alumni to carry out EIU and GCED after the completion of the workshops. In fact, Mr. Oshan Madushanka Gunathilake's case is the outcome of the action plans established from his learning in the Youth Leadership Workshop on GCED 2019.

The EIU/GCED Best Practices Series is unique in that it provides insights into how EIU/GCED is interpreted and put into practice in different contexts by those who are at the forefront of education. Although each case is set in different locations and institutional backgrounds, others can draw practical ideas and observations and learn from the case contributors' experiences, challenges

they faced, strategies used, and lessons learned while striving to overcome those challenges. Due to COVID-19 pandemic last 2020, the programme was discontinued but later resumed online and published the series in 2021 caused by the eagerness of the Centre's alumni. I hope that the EIU/GCED Best Practices will continue to serve as a useful reference for educators, policymakers and practitioners, who share a strong commitment for EIU and GCED.

Lastly, I would like to convey my deepest appreciation and congratulations to Mr. Oshan Madushanka Gunathilake for his continuing efforts to promote EIU and GCED, and creating a synergy effect among themselves by encouraging each other and sharing ideas, which I believe contributed to the successful publication of the EIU/GCED Best Practices 2021.

September 2021



LIM Hyun Mook
Director

EIU Best Practices is...

APCEIU has been committed to the promotion of Education for International Understanding (EIU) since its inception, in line with one of the pillars of education “Learning to Live Together.” EIU is a UNESCO initiative to promote a Culture of Peace through education, which is central to UNESCO’s mission. EIU aims to foster global citizens with values, attitudes, knowledge and skill sets necessary for learning to live together and overcoming racial, cultural, and religious conflicts. In the recent years, this mission has been reaffirmed by the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Education 2030. The SDG-4 and the accompanying Target 4.7^① highlights the importance of promoting global citizenship education (GCED).

APCEIU launched EIU Best Practices in 2006 to encourage and support educators, scholars and activists who wish to promote EIU and GCED by collecting and sharing success stories and lessons learned in promoting EIU/GCED in different social and cultural contexts. The EIU Best Practices aim to provide practical ideas and insights on how to design and implement EIU and GCED by sharing specific examples and practices carried out by practitioners on the ground.

The programme is conducted through the following steps: 1) Call for applications: APCEIU sends announcement letters along with application forms and guidelines to the alumni of the EIU/GCED capacity-building training programmes organized by APCEIU; 2) Screening and selection: Submitted applications are reviewed by the Screening Committee, who select the five best practices; 3) Online Monitoring: The selected applicant is required to make his or her programme/project available for online monitoring. The selected applicant

is obligated to cooperate in terms of making arrangements for APCEIU's online monitoring on his/her respective country. 4) Case presentation and award ceremony: Selected applicants present their cases and receive the Global Citizenship Education Award; 5) Submission of the final reports: Selected applicants submit the final reports to APCEIU based on the guidelines; and 6) Publication and dissemination: Final reports are published and disseminated on and offline.

APCEIU encourages educators, scholars, and activists to apply and share their diverse experiences and perspectives. The occurrence of COVID-19 pandemic last 2020, prompted the programme to cease, but finally resumed online and published the series in 2021 due to the keen interest of APCEIU's alumni. It is hoped that the EIU Best Practices will continue to inspire and inform practitioners, generate meaningful dialogue, and serve as useful materials for those who are committed to promote EIU and GCED and contribute to building a more just, peaceful, and sustainable world.

① Target 4.7: By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.

Contributor



Mr. Oshan Madushanka Gunathilake

Founder of GCED Syndicate, Sri Lanka

Mr. Oshan Madushanka Gunathilake is a practitioner of transformative education for Global Citizenship Education (GCED), Peace and Sustainable Development, based in Sri Lanka. He is the founder of GCED Syndicate - a local youth organization advocating for GCED and youth participation in sustainable development and inclusive governance. He has years of experience as a youth advocate for peace, human rights and liberty with local and global youth communities alongside both private and government counterparts, in the areas of preventing violent extremism and hate speech, media literacy, peacebuilding, transitional justice and reconciliation.

Apart from his fulltime profession as a Volunteer Management and Community Engagement Specialist at the United Nations Volunteers, he volunteers with many youth and community-based organizations in various roles such as Asia Advocacy Committee Member at United Network of Young Peacebuilders (UNOY), Leadership Management Coordinator for South Asian Region at Students for Liberty, Global Youth Ambassador at GCED Online Campus,

etc. He is also a past attendee of APCEIU's 5th Youth Leadership Workshop on GCED and has been a member of its global alumni network since 2019.

Being a grant awardee of Peace First in 2021 and Awareness with Human Action (AHA) funded by the European Union and consortium partners in 2020, he has implemented and supported many community development and advocacy programmes within the South Asia region. He is also an Emerging Leaders Academy Fellow (2020/21) of International Republican Institute (IRI), ALLY Fellow (2021) for Amplifying Leadership of Local Youth in Preventing Violent Extremism, and recently got selected as a Community Solutions Programme Fellow (2021/22) at the International Research & Exchanges Board (IREX).

Acknowledgement

I would like to take this opportunity to recognize and extend my gratitude to all the stakeholders who supported the Citizen Culture programme, from its implementation to completion.

The project was implemented under GCED Syndicate - a local youth advocacy group carrying the vision of creating more just, peaceful, inclusive, tolerant and sustainable communities with the mission of contributing to global impact through transformative education. My special thanks and gratitude goes to GCED Syndicate's voluntary core staff members; Ms Anuradhi Perera, Ms Shainujaa Inpanathan and Ms Taniya Darshani for their immense support in the coordination and facilitation of the programme.

Also, I would like to express my appreciation to all the resource persons and knowledge experts who contributed to the programme, shared their time and knowledge with us, namely Mr. Suchith Abeywikreme (Interfaith Colombo), Mr. Benislos Thushan (Digital Storytelling) and Mr. Firi Rahman (We Are From Here Project).

Furthermore, Citizen Culture was financially enabled by the contributions under the Awareness with Human Action (AHA) Project - a regional small grant awards programme funded by the European Union and implemented by their consortium of global partners including the Finn Church Aid, Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers and Sarvodaya Shramadhana Movement. I would also like to express my sincere gratitude for their support and trust throughout the execution of this programme.

And finally, none of this would have been possible without the commitment and active participation of our youth learners who kept their minds open and motivated us to do more in this beautiful journey of self-realization! My sincere appreciation to all of you, who will change the world to a better place!

Summary

“Citizen Culture” is a youth capacity development programme designed to foster intercultural and interreligious understanding within youth communities through the theories and learnings of GCED. The programme focused on a selected group of young individuals who are representing both vulnerable communities as well as privileged, also belonging to a diverse mixture of cultural, religious, social and ethnic backgrounds.

The general aim of the programme was to build up a space for youth from different cultures, religions, ethnicities and social statuses to come together and share their ideologies, beliefs and perspectives, allowing for better intercultural and interreligious awareness. This would facilitate the process of viewing each other’s similarities rather than differences, leading to overcome the “us-against-them” mindset and transform it into a narrative which everyone can relate and work together to better understand each other by critical inquiry, respect for diversity and shared sense of common humanity. Following this notion, the learners will go into their respective communities and spread this message as agents of positive change and actively contribute to the social cohesion, trust and awareness building through volunteer participation for transforming popular harmful narratives and practices which are structured in our society - cultivating a culture of peace.

In order to achieve this goal, the programme presented four phases, between learning in classrooms and experiencing and practicing in their own communities. Each phase had their own activities, objectives and outcomes as well as its own structure and format of delivery. At the same time, it is important to note that this programme was implemented during the 2021 Covid-19 global

pandemic, therefore include many alternative methods and workarounds that may arise in similar contexts and how offline-online hybrid method of delivery could be used with minimum disruptions within multi-phased learning events on GCED and similar domains. and cumulatively, they contributed towards the expected results. At the successful completion of the programme, it offered many learnings and findings that could be important best practices in GCED and EIU, and it is my privilege to present them through this publication for any academic, practitioner or enthusiast who might find them useful.

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ACRONYMS

EIU	Education for International Understanding
GCED	Global Citizenship Education
LTLT	Learning to Live Together
LRM	Learning Resource Material
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
REAP	Re-entry Application Projects
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UNDESD	United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development

Fostering Intercultural Awareness through GCED

1. Introduction and Background

“Citizen Culture” is a youth capacity-building programme focusing on enhancing social cohesion, understanding and respect among different local communities through intercultural and interreligious awareness. Utilizing the Global Citizenship Education (GCED) theories, the programme invests in open dialogue, critical inquiry, appreciation of diversity and understanding of common humanity to explore sustainable home-grown solutions for their local conflicts. It is structured in a manner which incorporates the development cognitive, socio-emotional and behavioural domains, ensuring the lifelong learning impact of the participants as well as self and group reflections, self-actualization, collaboration and practical application of what they learn in order to cater towards their real-world engagement.

The initial programme included a cohort of 10 Citizen Culture Ambassadors - youth between the age 18 to 29 from different parts of Sri Lanka and representing different ethnicities, religions, social and cultural backgrounds. The learners participated in a non-formal 3-days interactive residential training event on “Identities, Intercultural and Inter-religious Awareness through GCED”, where they were introduced to the GCED pedagogy, theories and how youth participation in local contexts would assist them in creating a more just, peaceful and sustainable communities. Following that, learners were engaged as groups in their respective communities in identifying certain common pressing issues and organizing community dialogues with different stakeholders - putting

what they learned into practice. These dialogues managed to build up more resilience in their communities and help them identify potential solutions they can explore. Thirdly, the participants were introduced to Visual Storytelling as a tool of expression in transforming social narratives through a series of online classes and engagements. As the final stage, these Ambassadors put together a Photographic Journal on Sri Lanka's cultural and religious identities, lifestyles, peace and reconciliation that transcends across its citizens' different beliefs and identities with the contributions sourced through youth storytellers and amateur photographers around the country.

The activities under the programme took both in-person and virtual approaches and it was very successful maintaining the engagement of learners, developing friendships and bonds and cultural sharing as well as uninterrupted continuation of learning and practical application of learned theories. Going forward, this approach would be quite useful and effective for educators to structure their non-formal education programmes - specially taking the Covid-19 uncertainties into consideration!

Through participating in the activities the participants gained the knowledge, exposure and critical competencies which surpass their dominant viewpoints and cultures they were limited to. The friendships, bonds and trust they developed towards each other through engaging with them would bolster their future interactions with outside communities and build bridges for future collaboration for common benefit. Proving the sustainable impact of the initiative, we are observing that even after the conclusion of the programme, the Citizen Culture Ambassadors' network managed to act as agents of change to bring out innovative solutions for their community issues, while advocating and sharing the practices of GCED in local contexts.

Citizen Culture was designed with a hope of sustainably addressing some of the major issues in the Sri Lankan society that have been brewing over a period of time. Over the last few decades, Sri Lanka had to undergo various incidents that

have created a continuous streak of mistrust, hate, and violence focused on its many ethnicities, religions and cultures – all caused by misunderstandings and misinterpretations. Among these incidents we can list down the unfortunate cases of 30 years war against terrorism¹⁾, Digana-Teldeniya racial riots²⁾, Easter Sunday Attack³⁾, COVID-19 pandemic and more politicized events such as the constitutional crisis in 2018. These incidents have left such devastating after effects that relate to economic, political and social fronts. From all these cases, one thing that could be seen as very relatable to youth in today's society would be the wave of violent extremism, hate speech and radicalization we can now see in both the real-life and cyberspace.

These community issues based on discrimination, marginalization and negative stereotypes has been further widened due to the political divide created based on various political agenda and streams of misinformation, disinformation, propaganda and conspiracy theories, hate speech which incites violent extremism in local communities. With the influence of Covid-19 pandemic more and more cases of discrimination based on ethnicities, race and religion has appeared with the negative usage of media and information that sensationalize such cases for their profits. Marginalization of victims, discrimination of communities has once again become the new norm due to the lack of critical skills in media and information, coexistence, reconciliation and social cohesion. Youth, women and other minority groups have become the biggest victim in these repercussions and most vulnerable to the impact of violent extremism and radicalization. The proposed initiative was planned to address these issues via an array of youth-centered participatory initiatives focusing on non-formal education methodologies and theories of GCED.

The existing conditions of the Covid-19 global pandemic definitely impacted the

① Jayshree Bajoria: The Sri Lankan Conflict - <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/sri-lankan-conflict>

② JAisha Nazim: The Digana-Kandy Racial Riots: What You Need To Know - <https://roar.media/english/life/in-the-know/the-digana-kandy-racial-riots-what-you-need-to-know>

③ JInternational SOS: Sri Lanka Easter Attacks - <https://www.internationalsos.com/case-studies/case-study-folder/sri-lanka-easter-attacks>

execution of the programme and participants' (including the learners, facilitators, resources persons and service providers) health safety and wellbeing was always a main concern throughout the programme. All the in-person activities were designed and limited to adhere official health guidelines and a considerable part of the activities, engagements and follow-ups were shifted to virtual models. There were many challenges in reorganizing certain modules, activities and lessons to be friendly enough for a virtual environment and still maintain the expected engagement, interaction and overall learning experience while keeping true to our timelines, goals and budgetary limitations. However, all these challenges were overcome with the dedication and team work and expected outcomes were met as being proved by the impact evaluation results.

2. Descriptions of the Programme

2.1 Goals & Objectives

The general aim of the programme was to provide a platform for youth from different cultures, religions, ethnicities and social statuses to come together and share their ideologies, beliefs and perspectives with each other, allowing for better intercultural and interreligious awareness. This would facilitate the process of understanding each other's similarities rather than differences, leading to overcome the "us-against-them" mindset and transform it into a narrative which everyone can relate and work together to better understand each other by critical inquiry, respect for diversity and shared sense of common humanity. Following this notion, the learners will go into their respective communities and spread this message as agents of positive change and actively contribute to the social cohesion, trust and awareness building through volunteer participation for transforming popular harmful narratives and practices which are structured in our society - cultivating a culture of peace.

Specified Goals and Objectives

1. Introducing and adapting the theories of GCED for intercultural and interreligious awareness, tolerance and respect
2. Utilizing of youth-led community dialogues for addressing common social injustices and exploring sustainable home-grown solutions
3. Transforming the dominant cultural narratives and social stereotypes through visual storytelling
4. Cultivating the culture of peace through participatory grassroots action in local contexts
5. Promoting of GCED concepts and theories among local communities including youth and adult learners

2.2 Target Groups

Youth between the age 18 to 29, social workers/ community leaders/ youth activists or young professionals, etc. In order to construct effective dialogues and reflections during the training sessions, it was important to include as many diversity into the cohort by including representations in different local ethnicities, religions, social and cultural backgrounds as well as a balanced gender representation. Some of the individuals also represented marginalized communities such as religious minorities, victims of violent conflicts, lower income families, etc.

2.3 Structure of the Programme

The programme carried the purpose of creating a space for positive dialogue among local youth changemakers to support the intercultural and inter-religious awareness and GCED within their communities. The programme consisted of 4 phases as described below;

1. Residential Training on Intercultural and Interreligious Awareness through GCED

2. Virtual Community Dialogues (Intercultural and Interreligious Dialogues)
3. Visual Storytelling Classes for Peacebuilding and Transforming Narratives
4. Peace Island Photographic Journal

The first phase took place physically as a non-formal learning experience for a selected number of audience while the rest of the phases happened through virtual and online means. This was mainly to minimize the possible negative impact from the Covid-19 pandemic and local travel restrictions imposed to fight it but nevertheless managed to bring about the expected results and impact. Due to the strong understanding of the context, connections and bonds which participants created during the first phase, their interests and inspiration to engage in the programme was solidified and empowered them to actively participate with the rest of the programme. Also, while the first and third phases focused on developing their capacities and departing knowledge in selected areas, the second and fourth phases focused on engaging them into utilizing what they learned and put that into practice. This model enabled the usage of experiential learning pedagogy, empowering learners with real-world application of what they learned while critically reflecting on the responses they gain. The learners could see a clear tangible outcome which they achieved by themselves such as successful community dialogues or a crowd-sourced photographic journal that ensured them of their ability to practice GCED theories in their communities and adopt such behaviours.

2.4 Activities in Detail

a) Residential Training on Intercultural and Interreligious Awareness through GCED



© GCED Syndicate team

As the first phase of the programme the residential training highly focused on getting the participants in the same ground and building a sense of common identity among them. In order to facilitate this process, we had two virtual meetings prior to the actual event and get everyone introduced to each other and share their interests and what they look forward to achieving from the training. This gave a boost in the social understanding among participants as well as the facilitators which made them comfortable around each other during the training. In order to facilitate this process, programme participants were selected and informed in advance. The 10 participants included young men and women (3 male and 7 female) between the ages of 18-29 representing all religions and ethnicities of Sri Lanka, who came from different social backgrounds, from most privileged to least. A special 70% quota for young women, positioning female focused gender-budgeting to encourage more female participation.

The training event was conducted for 3 days, where we engaged with learners in a non-formal environment, enabling them to express themselves freely while unlearning-learning happened very heavily. The area of choice was a covered yet comfortable area, with adequate seating, stationery materials, lighting, air-conditioning and multimedia facilities. This allowed for smooth flow of events without external distractions. Before starting their learning journey, they were

asked to design a “personal learning contract” that reflects what their expectations are and what they have to do in order to get there, sealing their commitment to learning, being open-minded, respecting others and trusting the process. All the learning content and component was designed to be delivered in an interactive and lively manner which ensured participatory learning and contribution from learners. These activities included both individual and group activities such as ice breakers, energizers, experience sharing, group presentations, world cafes, jigsaw activities, gallery walks, role-plays, reflections, impact movie screenings, journaling, action planning, etc. They were also introduced to the idea of Citizen Culture Ambassadors, where they become community change agents advancing the learnings, they receive through this programme in their local contexts and carry out their own activities advocating GCED and culture of peace.

The residential training focused on areas such as Global Citizenship Education and its relevant local contexts, understanding identity, values of diversity and respect, difference of perceptions and narratives, stereotypes, equality and equity, discriminating and social injustices, intercultural and interreligious peace. Further, they were introduced to and asked to reflect upon Social Emotional Values such as active listening, compassion, empathy, mindfulness, through in-class activities and practices. The training agenda can be found in the Annex section.

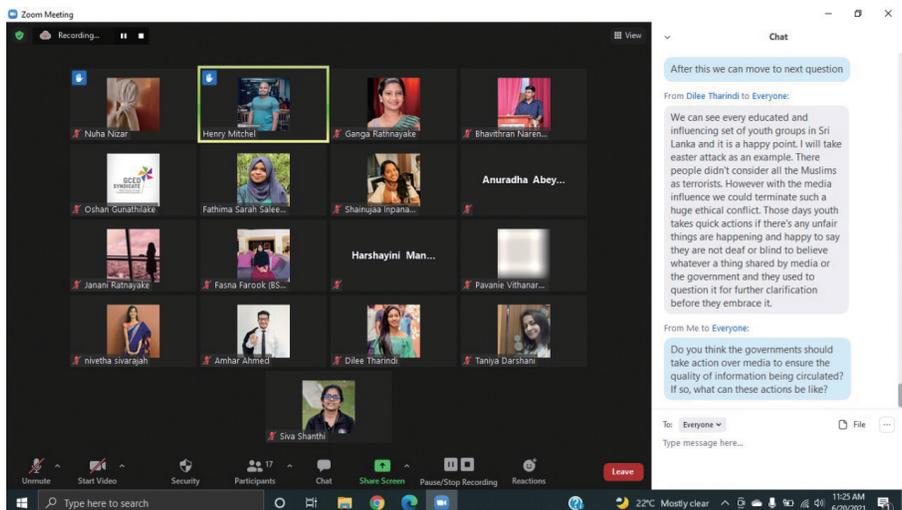
The entire latter half of the training was dedicated to learning the concept of “peaceful dialogue” and how it can be used in GCED and peacebuilding in local contexts. For this, external resource persons were invited who specialize in interfaith and intercultural dialogues in civil societies, who explained the importance of social dialogue for sustainable conflict resolution and its positive impact and benefits. Further, the learners were engaged in a mock community dialogue with role play, where they were given the chance to practically experience and enhance their competencies in dialogue moderation, acknowledging concerns, fair community representation and reporting recommendations.

Throughout the training, participants were always encouraged to ask questions and contribute to ongoing lessons and discussions based on their own

perspectives and experiences. Having a very diverse and culturally rich group of learners, this process allowed them to learn new things which are connected to each other's culture and religion as well as things they would usually not concern them due to social and structural differences. Since leaving the accommodation and training premises was restricted due to Covid-19 precautions, there was more opportunities for them to socialize and get to know each other very intimately, which developed their bonds and friendships for future. We also utilized this time after the learning hours to host optional events like casual hangouts, movie screenings and games that bolstered this process.

In addition to the participants, the training involved 4 facilitative trainers who both delivered sessions and coordinated the training event. Each trainer was given advance notice to make the necessary preparations. Also, for each session, we had identified one facilitator who headed the session, and one co-facilitator who supported the activities, materials and technological things.

b) Virtual Community Dialogues (Intercultural and Interreligious Dialogues)



© GCED Syndicate team

Conducting Virtual Community Dialogues to promote peaceful resolutions for local issues was part of Citizen Culture Ambassadors' follow-up assignments. Our aim was to conduct 3 community dialogues on three different topics or issues they find in their society. Since they had received the necessary knowledge, skills and practice through the residential training in advance, the process for this phase was not difficult. The impact we were expecting to see is the participants and stakeholders who partake in these community dialogues will have an understanding that, community dialogues could be an excellent way of realizing multiple viewpoints, perspectives and concerns of common issues they come across in their communities, which impact differently for different groups. It also provides a platform to share and explore potential ideas for solutions which are more sustainable, participatory and homegrown.

The participants were asked to form 3 groups, considering gender and diversity balance and research on a pressing issue they see which is common in all of their communities. Once they came up with their suggestions, we assisted them to fine-tune the discussion topic and guiding questions for the dialogues. However, the implementation of the dialogue was completely given to be led by each team and they were asked to come to us if they have any questions.

Following the guidance and learnings they received throughout the programme, each team managed to conduct their virtual community dialogues successfully. Each team had certain places where they could improve and they were happy to receive our feedback on them. Some teams also conducted feedback surveys with the participants, which allowed them to gain more insights on how to effectively facilitate community dialogues for peace.

Community Dialogue Focus Area	No of audience/ beneficiaries	
	Direct beneficiaries	Indirect beneficiaries
Community Dialogue: Role of Youth in Gender Stereotypes	Male: 03 Female: 08	Male: 01 Female: 03
Community Dialogue: Impact of Post-war Mentality among Young People	Male: 03 Female: 04	Male: 01 Female: 02
Community Dialogue: Social Media and its Effects on Peacebuilding Efforts	Male: 04 Female: 07	Male: 01 Female: 02

Through these dialogues the Citizen Culture Ambassadors managed to draw out together best practices and recommendations, based on the suggestions and opinions shared by the dialogue participants which could be very useful resources for future conflict transformation activities and policy formulation. Another thing we realized from the activity is that conducting such dialogues on virtual platforms may have its own merits and challenges but it could definitely be a successful alternative during the prevailing Covid-19 situation. Also, conducting this virtually allowed the youth learners to organize them with minimum difficulties and logistical concerns and increased the number of participation of stakeholders from long distances to a single platform which could be quite difficult otherwise. Additionally, participants felt much at ease to share their opinions freely due to the possibility of turning off their cameras, chat option, and using pseudonyms.

c) Visual Storytelling Masterclass on Peacebuilding and Transforming Narratives



© GCED Syndicate team

The Virtual Storytelling Masterclass on Peacebuilding and Transforming Narratives was conducted as continuation of what was discussed during the initial training on the importance of exploring different perspectives and narratives in our societies. Also, through this event we managed to introduce visual storytelling as an effective technique in raising awareness on hidden narratives in our communities which are often disregarded by the public. Learning that there is more than one side to a single story and how it may lead to negative outcomes if only one narrative is perceived is an important step in building peaceful globalized communities.

Although this online masterclass was a continuation of some theories introduced through the training, we realized that it could also be a stand-alone capacity building event for new learners who are interested in learning about the concept of storytelling and its various techniques. Since it was hosted on a virtual environment, we could safely engage a larger number of participants who are already familiar with peacebuilding and responsible community engagement and create a greater impact while introducing potential future learners and enthusiasts of GCED. Therefore, we conducted this event as a public event, limiting the number of additional participants to a maximum of 40 individuals. Plus, thanks to the online platform usage, the digital resource sharing, presentation and interactive engagement could be maximized, that is quite important for teaching multimedia based subjects like this.

The training was delivered by a subject expert who has specialist knowledge in digital storytelling and bringing out hidden narratives of society through photography. The medium of photography was selected due to accessibility and wide creative liberties it provides and it lays a foundation for our final activity - the “Peace Island: Photographic Journal. The overall training used a transformative learning pedagogy and participatory learning methods where the trainer posed questions, break-out group activities and idea sharing for enhancing learners’ engagement and critical inquiry on the subject. To make participants’ understanding more broader, we used various examples of photographs, video clips, best practices and guides on transforming narratives through visual

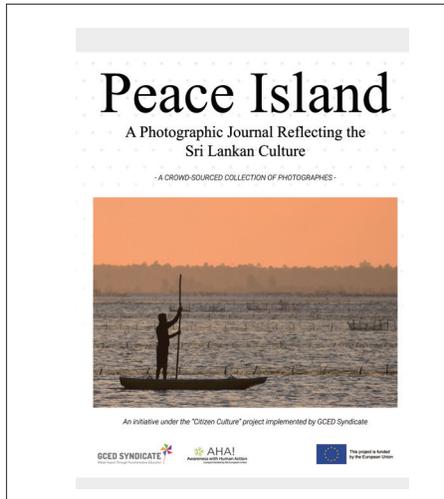
storytelling for peace. Further, at the end of the training, there was a special case sharing from a local social activist and storyteller, who had done a similar project titled “We Are From Here⁴⁾”, exploring and sharing the stories and perspectives of a local urban poor community who were affected by gentrification caused by government-led infrastructure development in their locality.

Event	No of audience/ beneficiaries	
	Direct Programme Participants	External Participants
Visual Storytelling Masterclass on Peace, Intercultural Awareness and Transforming Narratives	Male: 03 Female: 07	Male: 16 Female: 22 Other: 01

Based on the feedback received after the event, it was evident that majority of the learners were very impressed in what they got to learn and also interested in learning more about the Citizen Culture programme and GCED. We managed to direct them to relevant sources and add them to a mailing list which we use to share updates and resources on GCED and its local and global applications for further engagement. They were also invited to contribute to the “Peace Island” compilation with their photographs and stories which was highly engaging and effective which is proven by the submissions we received afterwards.

⁴⁾ We Are From Here Project: <https://www.instagram.com/wearefromhereproject/>

d) Peace Island Photographic Journal



© GCED Syndicate team

Throughout the programme, the learners were introduced to the importance of transcending dominant narratives and understanding the story behind. The idea of looking into a certain matter from a different angle or perspective is a necessary learning brought under GCED that promotes understanding, respect, tolerance and paying attention to people's emotions and feelings which we might forget in this fast-paced globalized culture. However, in order to reject negative stereotypes and discrimination which take place in our societies, understanding the difference of narratives and real-life stories of real people is quite important.

Visual Storytelling is one of the most effective tool we can use in this case to promote hidden stories of our societies, and transform public opinion based on biased one-sided viewpoints to more holistic, realistic and inclusive ones. Through the Citizen Culture programme, we managed to develop participants' understandings and skills in social impact photography, that can be used to highlight real-life instances where such hidden narratives would appear in their daily lives. The idea of narratives, perspectives and the importance of transforming them in order to create a culture of peace was discussed in detail during the residential training with the use of examples, experience sharing and

group reflections while the skills and competencies of photo-journalism and visual storytelling was addressed through the Visual Storytelling Masterclass for Peacebuilding and Transforming Narratives conducted virtually as a follow-up skill building event.

In the final stage of the programme, we developed a Photographic Journal titled, “Peace Island” that presented many folds of social lives of Sri Lankan local communities, their cultural and religious identities, social diversity and lifestyles, and peace, unity and reconciliation. This was organized together with the participants where they played multiple roles as photographers, storytellers, curators, and editors. The photographs were sourced through the submissions of programme participants as well as youth activists, amateur photographers and storytellers across the country through a national level call for photographic submissions. The submitting party was also asked to include a caption and a short description of what their photograph represents so everyone could understand the context with the photographer’s narrative of the same situation. From the hundreds of submissions we received, the participants were tasked to curate the most relevant and impactful entries to be featured in the book. This compilation of photographs is publicly available for anyone who wishes to use them under creative commons for their community and peacebuilding activities.

- **Please refer to: Peace Island Photographic Journal**

<https://gcedsyndicate.org/citizen-culture/peace-island>

2.5 Relevance to EIU/GCED

a) EIU and GCED Aspects within Citizen Culture

- ***Intercultural and Interreligious Awareness***

Lack of intercultural and interreligious awareness often causes conflicts in societies. In fact, these are the most prominent types of conflicts that happen around the world which also leads to communal tension, riots and violence. This

is also the foundation of preventing violent extremism which happens with the lack of intercultural and inter-religious awareness and tolerance that could create gaps in social structures. The mistrust and biases caused by misunderstanding others' cultural or religious practices and customs may seem like mistakes but in a globalized community, every global citizen should be aware of these matters at least to a certain extent.

Promoting intercultural and interreligious awareness among local communities promotes peaceful lifestyles, social cohesion, inter-ethnic bonds and shared values in belonging to a common humanity. This supportive nature would pave the path to a more sustainable, peaceful, inclusive society where wellbeing of citizens is considered the most important factor in development and everyone is treated equally with equitable opportunities to everyone. Also, intercultural and interreligious awareness help us learn more about each other, share knowledge, cultivate respect and tolerance for their practices and beliefs rather than fear them. Therefore, it is quite fitting to say that awareness creates solidarity and peace between people.

- ***Respect for Identity, Diversity and Inclusion***

The concept of identity is a very important topic which comes in GCED. Many factors contribute to define our identity such as our social, cultural, economic backgrounds, education, capabilities, beliefs, relationships, values, etc. in the current globalized contexts. Given the complex human nature, the diversity of these identities may lead to various types of conflicts, discrimination and misunderstandings quite easily.

However, what is important is that understanding each of us have our differences and it makes us stronger as a community. Each different person or group brings in values and skills that others may not. And these differences may look uncommon sometimes, but learning to appreciate these differences, respecting each other's customs, beliefs and heritage is an important part of being a global citizen. Many wars have been fought over such differences and various injustices are still happening around the world because of the same reason. But if we can

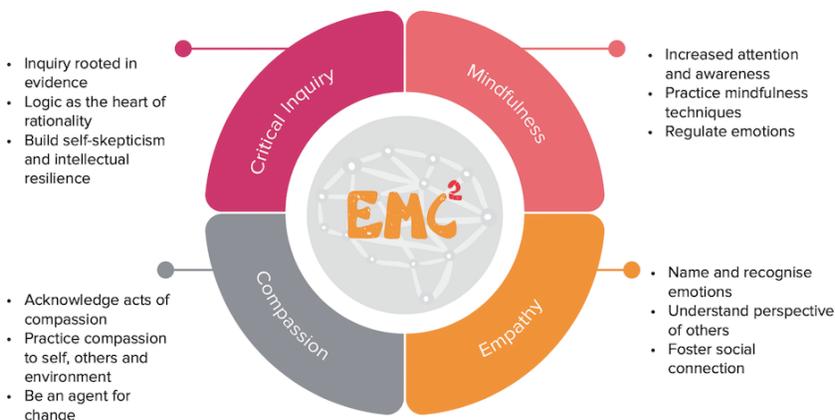
understand to live with an open mind and not judge others for their differences - it will be much easier to minimize these negative components from our societies.

- ***Dialogues for Peace***

Dialogue is one of the approaches that is mostly used and cuts across all other approaches to conflict resolution and transformation. Dialogue is a distinctive way of communicating, which is the essence of sustainable relationship. Dialogues for peace happens in communities where there might arise communal issues and in order to find sustainable and non-violent solutions, a community dialogue could be very impactful. Community dialogues brings in different stakeholders from every side of the community, bearing various concerns and agendas but the purpose. Dialogues promotes a safe space for community representatives to raise their issues and concerns and seek homegrown solutions which can be implemented by local levels.

Dialogues are a great method of upholding the equality, transparency, participatory governance, rule of law, justice and urgency for human needs. This is also a tool of resolving and transforming conflicts and therefore quite important for global citizens to engage with each other but also seek solutions for communal issues and pursue higher potential. Also, a dialogue process is the result of careful preparation to reach the conditions necessary for a beneficial dialogue and level the playing field, as it were, before bringing people together. It is crucial to make sure the main actors and stakeholders are ready to genuinely engage in such a process.

• **Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)**



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Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) can be described as learning that equips all learners to identify and navigate emotions, practice mindful engagement, and exhibit prosocial behavior for human flourishing towards a peaceful and sustainable planet. When learners become aware of their own emotions and how to navigate them peacefully in social settings, they become more calm, tolerant, respectful and resilient with open minds and caring hearts. They develop a sense of belonging and try to relate to others’ feelings and understand what kind of emotional trip they are taking. This creates more peaceful and meaningful interactions among learners, leaving less space for violence. Creating such environments promotes social cohesion and relationships built upon sustainable social dynamics where everyone feels connected, cared, recognized and equal.

In order to develop SEL within Citizen Culture programme, I used the EMC² Framework developed by the UNESCO Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development (MGIEP). The EMC² Framework, focuses on human values that every human being should embrace; empathy, mindfulness, compassion and critical inquiry. These values were systematically

introduced to the learners during their residential training event through experiential learning approaches and replicated in their classroom engagements and follow-up activities.

- ***Transforming Social Narratives through Storytelling***

Transformation of social narratives refers to the process of changing one's perspective on social construct or behaviour into something different. In other words, this is an eye-opening process where you introduce a different narrative of the same story - a different angle or viewpoint - which is often disregarded by the dominant narrative that is more popular and widely accepted. In order to become true global citizens that understand and respect all human beings as one, learners need to be able to see through these dominant social narratives and explore the hidden alternative narratives available for the same story. Also, in order to prevent unjust treatment and stereotypes which cause negative impact in our societies, it is important to identify and recognize the hidden narratives which transforms existing belief systems. To make this happen, we can use storytelling as a tool of transforming narratives, where we share stories from different communities and different perspectives which presents multiple angles of the same story that are normally hidden by the dominant narrative. Photographs, drawings, short films, documentaries, songs, poems, articles, short stories, wall arts and many other techniques can be used to express these unheard narratives and transform negative social perspectives that creates violence and unjust in societies.

b) Learning Approaches and Pedagogies

GCED Learning Domains

The key learning outcomes, key learner attributes, topics and learning objectives suggested in GCED are based on three domains of learning as mentioned below:

- Cognitive Domain: knowledge and thinking skills necessary to better understand the world and its complexities;
- Socio-emotional Domains: values, attitudes and social skills that enable learners to develop affectively, psychosocially, and physically and to

- enable them to live together with others respectfully and peacefully; and
- Behavioural Domain: conduct, performance, practical application and engagement.

Each learning domain is interlinked to each other and integrated into a holistic learning process. This is similar to nurturing learners' brain, heart and hands simultaneously. Through designing the learning content and activities of the Citizen Culture programme according to these 3 domains, the learners constantly engaged in enhancing their knowledge and understanding of GCED theories and connected practices as well as the social, cultural, and religious issues existing in their community as well as outside of it. They learned about the negative impact it bears on development and peace. Then they also learned about what other communities go through, how they feel, act and respond to certain injustices by emotionally connecting and relating to each other in a common humanity. They managed to see past their differences and what connects them together. In the end, through application of these practices in their own self and in their daily lives and engaging collaboratively in follow-up activities such as the Peace Island photography book and community dialogues, they managed to change their behaviours and attitudes and promote those ideologies within their own communities.

Critical Pedagogy

In critical pedagogy, learners are presented with questions and challenges which leads them to critically inquire and analyze their existing understandings of things, narratives and views. In other words, it is a theory and practice of helping students achieve critical consciousness. This could be also be seen as an “unlearning” process that allows us to break down dominant social narratives and stereotypes and unearth hidden perspectives and alternative views which are usually left unaddressed.

In this method, students are given the opportunity to listen to themselves as well as their peers, and then critically analyze the contexts, situations, emotions, habits and other attributes related to certain ideas, and get a deeper and clearer

understanding of why things happen the way they're supposed to happen. They also develop a sense of right and wrong in their own conscience allowing them to break the social norms and practices which sometimes may be unfair and irrational. When applied to a group of learners representing diverse backgrounds, this allows for a vibrant discussion with various factors and culturally specific viewpoints that may not come up usually. Throughout the programme, this pedagogy was very effectively used to construct vivid dialogues with different perspectives, ideas and concerns from different identities and from diverse backgrounds allowing for critical inquiry and learning of multiple perspectives.

Transformative Learning Pedagogy



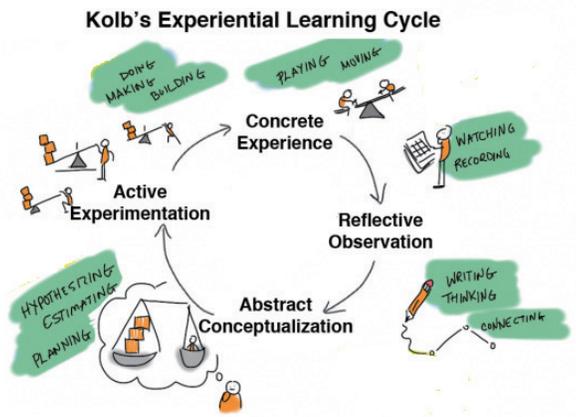
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Transformative Learning pedagogy looks into transforming the ideas, perspectives, attitudes and behaviours of learners through a process of critical examination of their beliefs, values, and knowledge. This process empowers students to engage in developing a reflective knowledge base, an appreciation for multiple perspectives, and a sense of critical consciousness and agency. In order to lead them in this path, educators are expected to provide necessary facts and entry points where learners will work together and individually, exploring social constructs, relationships and challenge their own actions through patterns through self-examination, critical reflection, actualization and redefinition.

The learning journey is seen as a process of constant change where learners

who embark in the journey are expected to evolve with a better sense of social responsibility and advocacy. Therefore, the transformative learning pedagogy facilitates for a more holistic learning environment where learners and educators get to let go of their roles and engage in the learning process together. However, due to its very dynamic and evolving qualities, this might turn to be challenging for some learners as well as educators. In any case, the recent researches also reveal that transformative learning occurs in open spaces for more relevant, updated, impactful learning and immersion in authentic learning experiences.

Experiential Learning



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In simple terms, experiential learning means learning from experience or engaging in a real experience. It immerses learners in an experience and then encourages them to reflect on that experience which leads to new avenues of thinking, associated skills and knowledge. In non-formal educational settings which allows learners to engage and interact with each other openly, this method works really well. The process begins with a concrete experience where learners go through with each other (possibly through a group activity/ game/ role-play scenario). It is followed with a reflection stage where learners get to analyze what happened and notice any connections, inconsistencies or conflicts. Then comes the critical conceptualization stage where they develop new understandings and theories based on what they experienced and reflected and finally leading to the

experimentation stage where they get to test out these new learnings through application and implementation in real life.

3. Conclusion

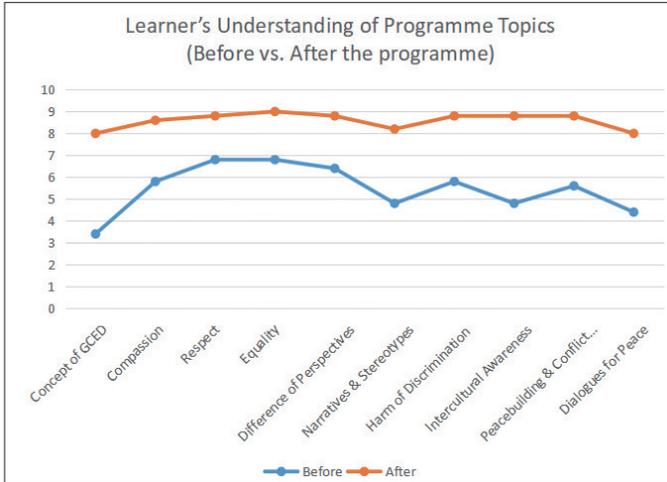
3.1 Evaluations and critical reflections

With the conclusion of the Citizen Culture programme, we realized that we had achieved all the goals we sat in the beginning and more. Some of these achievements can be summarized as;

- Learners' understanding of GCED, intercultural and inter-religious identities were significantly improved
- Citizen Culture Ambassadors initiative was formed with 10 youth leaders who actively advocate for GCED and act as agents of change in their respective communities
- 03 virtual community dialogues focusing on pressing issues in the society was successfully convened
- Best practices and guides in relation to the topics which community dialogues were on were produced as recommendations for future practitioners and policy makers
- Peace Island - a photography book which captures the hidden narratives of Sri Lanka's diverse cultural and religious identities was produced

Before the beginning on the programme, we conducted a pre-event survey on the understanding and competencies of all the learners on certain topics which we were planning to address through the programme. Following the conclusion of the residential training, we conducted a post-event survey to capture their improvement on the same and it reflected very clearly on how much they have broadened their awareness and perspectives on GCED and related sub-topics. This helped us to verify that they are on the correct track and no one is left

behind as well as realign and adjust any future activities as required.



In addition to measuring their critical understanding and knowledge in these areas, we also tested their confidence level on advocating and educating others on GCED, social justice, active participation in peacebuilding through the same survey. Based on the responses, it was evident that there was approximately 40% increase on these competency levels among the learners, which is a clear indication on their growth and active participation in community building.

3.2 Impact on the target groups and larger communities

The greatest impact would be the capacity-building and training of 10 Citizen Culture Ambassadors between the ages of 18 and 29, who were trained under the programme. These 10 young individuals developed their understanding, knowledge, skills and competencies in advocating for GCED and educating their communities on its theories, practices and positive impact. Also, they were trained to become focal points of their respective communities, lead innovation and change for a more just, peaceful, sustainable, tolerant and inclusive collaboration in grassroots level. Further, as change agents they are initiating their own local projects and activities on GCED and sustainable development and

lifestyle education, peacebuilding and intercultural and interreligious awareness and resilience.

Through the 3 virtual community dialogues, we engaged with over 30 individuals who were representing various ethnic, religious and social backgrounds - that shared their opinions, concerns and ideas about certain topics that are common in their communities. Also, these dialogues could bring in different perspectives of different social identities together to explore innovative, sustainable and home-grown solutions that can be implemented in local levels. These ideas were recorded and shared publicly for the reference of future practitioners and policy makers.

The Virtual Masterclass on Visual Storytelling managed to bring together 50 participants from different parts of the country between the ages of 16 and 29, who learned using visual storytelling and photographs to bring out hidden stories and narratives in their societies. This initiative inspired many young activists, storytellers and amateur photographers to use their creativity to transform narratives and participate in the peacebuilding process.

Finally, the Peace Island photography book and its compilation created a lasting impact through showcasing cases from the Sri Lankan society, reflections of common humanity, intercultural and interreligious bonds, and hidden stories of their lifestyles that are often overtaken by the dominant narratives. The open call for photographic submissions was answered by over 150 youth participants and the selected photographs and their photographers were highlighted for their creativity and active citizenship. The digital version of the book was shared publicly and made available for anyone who wishes to have a deeper look into the social and cultural identities of Sri Lanka in a brand new narrative.

3.3 Implications and suggestions

Some of the lessons learned throughout this experience could be identified as:

- Conducting a virtual greetings event followed by some individual/ group

exercises before learners meet in-person would help them to break the ice and understand each other much easily;

- Utilizing both in-person and virtual events, approaches and methods would bring in additional levels of engagement and dimensions to their learning experience;
- Follow-up activities after the main learning exercise (training or workshop) would help them stay in touch, solidify their learnings and skills in practical real-world context;
- Encouraging free play, free expression and interaction with minimal intervention during the learning hours would initiate a transformative learning process which would be more impactful and powerful tool for teaching. Encouraging the same outside of the learning hours would invite stronger bonds, social relationships and cross-cultural understanding among them;
- Good preparation, research and localized examples would also be beneficial when delivering lessons;
- Progressive pedagogies such as transformative learning, critical pedagogy and experiential learning would bring in more dynamic discussions, views and opinions as well as bolster learners' cognitive, socio-emotional and behavioural domains;
- When conducting community dialogues, it is vital to engage various stakeholders with different perspectives as well as pay attention to details in their emotions;
- Online platforms can be quite beneficial for community dialogues - specially with the Covid-19 or any similar restricted context; and
- Follow-up learning and capacity-development activities would help learners to stay engaged, motivated and explore their creativity resulting in higher social impact and innovative solutions.

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■ Annex

Annex 1

Agenda of the residential training event

	Learning Area	Time Duration (minutes)	Learning Method
Day 01	Welcome and instructions	30	Activity: 2 truths and 1 lie
	Grounding	20	Group activity: Ice breaker
	Workshop details and ground rules	15	Presentation
	Learning agreement	30	Group discussion, drafting individual learning agreements
	Casual hangout (optional)	90	Experience sharing, games, casual discussions
Day 02	Mindfulness session	30	Breathing exercises
	Morning booster	10	Individual activity: Shadow dancing
	Reflecting Day 1	10	Open sharing of personal reflections
	Introduction to GCED	60	Presentation, Activity: Characteristics of a global citizen
	Global values: Active listening		Group activity: Pair and share
	GCED at Home: Starting Local	45	Group Activity: Exploring our local issues
	Global values: Compassion	30	Group Activity: Mind map
	Identity and Diversity	45	Presentation, Group discussion, Individual activity: Challenges and values of diversity, Personal reflections sheet
	Perceptions and perspectives	30	Group activity: Captioning photographs from our communities, Presentation
	Understanding stereotypes	30	Presentation, experience sharing
	Difference of narratives	30	Case study: The Danger of a Single Story
	Equality in our society	40	Activity: Sharing a chocolate, open discussion, Vision statements for Equality
	Discrimination and harassment	40	Presentation, Group Activity: World Cafe
	Global values: Empathy	20	Activity: Power walk
	Short Movie Screening (optional)	90	Showcase social impact movies/ documentaries, movie based discussion
Day 03	Mindfulness session	30	Breathing exercises
	Morning booster	10	Activity: Greeting in different languages
	Reflecting Day 1	10	Open sharing of personal reflections
	Global values: Respect	20	Activity: Passing the pen
	Exploring religion and culture	40	Open dialogue, Group activity: Jigsaw
	Interfaith and intercultural dialogues for peace	20	Presentation
	GCED through community dialogues	180	Mock dialogues, role-play, practice sessions
	Planning for Future	45	Action plans for teams - Community dialogues to discuss local issues

Annex 2

Some of the participants' responses to the question "What was your favorite learning from the Residential Training (Phase 1)?"

I loved the way how Citizen Culture gave me a platform to share my thoughts among a group of people. Being a socially awkward person, this training was a great opportunity for me to open up myself. My favourite learning session was learning about the diversity and how to prepare yourself to conduct your own dialogue.

Every lesson was really good. My most favorite one was the group discussion with the relevant responsible leaders to make the people aware.

The session on perceptions and stereotypes. It was a very engaging session that enhanced our knowledge on different stereotypical perceptions that society have and how it is important to be the changemakers. Breaking the stereotypical mindset is a very important responsibility as a youth.

I would say, I really liked it when we all could share our thoughts about happiness and how compassion creates a safe place for everyone in everyone's heart. It was beautiful to understand that. It was something we knew but never realized.

Though I had an idea about all the other topics I didn't really have an idea about building up a dialogue. I loved the mock session about building up a dialogue.

Annex 3

Some of the participants' responses to the question "What was your biggest learning/ takeaway from conducting the community dialogues? (Phase 2)"

Team A	It is important to start a discussion for certain perspectives to unveil and when the opportunity is given that people should take courage and talk at such forums. This forum provided understanding for such dialogues to break barriers and reach the grassroots levels. Community levels of rural-urban, educated-uneducated, young-old are such examples and the spillover of perspectives at such forum is vital for positive community development in all sectors.
Team B	Creating awareness is important. Dialogues can make impact on others. Team work is necessary. Listening to others with an open mind is essential.
Team C	The biggest takeaway of our session was, we were able to understand the different perspectives of participants representing various social and cultural backgrounds, so that we were able to gather their opinions on how we can use social media for peace building.

Annex 4

Some of the participants' responses to the question "What was your biggest learning/ takeaway from the Visual Storytelling Masterclass (Phase 3)?"

I learned how visual storytelling can bring about social change and the techniques to be followed in mobile photography.
How we can turn an information that can be easily understood.
Well, to be honest, I learned so many things like how a photograph can mean in so many ways. I know we use photography as a way of sharing our thoughts but then this session broaden my mind on how photography can affect the different perspectives of lives and how it could be used to change or develop a community or a certain group of people.
The effects of photography. I was very excited, to quote a facilitator, "there are no lies on photographs."
Impact and uses of visual story telling.
We all think that we need a good camera to capture the good photos but the everyday project highlighted how even mobile phones could be used to capture photos which also conveys so many ideas.
The knowledge on how to use photography techniques and creativity to create an engaging and impactful story.
The Everyday Project and We Are from Here Project are very thought provoking and empowering to raise voice for the people.
My biggest learning was how to use a photograph or a story in a video in a manner that gives a deeper social message.
The importance of storytelling in building positive perceptions on society. Storytelling can deviate people from realizing the negativity in a situation and create positivism. This is the foundation for creating peace and the spark to create that change can be made with storytelling.
To see and think about all the situations in a new creative perspective.