Compassion in Action

March 18 – 20, 2015
New Delhi

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This report is based on the proceedings of a PeaceJam conference that was organized in New Delhi from March 18-20, 2015 under the *Hum Kadam: Education for Peace* initiative of Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace (WISCOMP) and its partner the Foundation for Academic Excellence and Access (FAEA). WISCOMP is grateful to the FAEA Board members for their unwavering support and to Prof. V. R. Mehta, for mentoring the project.

WISCOMP is grateful to Mr. Rajiv Mehrotra and the Foundation for Universal Responsibility of His Holiness the Dalai Lama for their constant guidance and encouragement. Special thanks to Dr. Meenakshi Gopinath, Founder and Director, WISCOMP for her vision and ideas that have shaped the *Hum Kadam: Education for Peace* Initiative.

WISCOMP acknowledges with gratitude the contributions of PeaceJam Foundation team of Dawn Engle, Ivan Suvanjueff, Brett Engle, Penpa Dolma and Kate Cumbo.

A very special thanks to Thupten Tsewang, Director, Foundation for Universal Responsibility of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, for leading the process of design of the programme with the PeaceJam team in Colorado, USA. Nyima Dorjee, Mukkram Wahid and Akorshi Sengupta assisted in every possible way to make the conference a success.

The support of colleagues at WISCOMP, Seema Kakran, Shivani Kaul, Manjrika Sewak, Nidhi Bhatnagar, Harish C. Bhatt, Sree Kumari V and Devender Kumar is gratefully acknowledged.

Diksha Poddar
Introduction

In March 2015, WISCOMP partnered with the Peace Jam Foundation, Foundation for Universal Responsibility and Foundation for Academic Excellence and Access to organise a conference on Cultivating Compassion and Peace which brought together 107 school students, 20 teachers and 14 young adults as mentors. Students were drawn from 18 schools in Delhi, Gurgaon, Noida, Dharamshala, Srinagar and Shivpuri for the conference held from March 18–20, 2015. The primary focus of the conference was to create informed and compassionate young leaders who have the skills, knowledge and passion to work for non-violent solutions to contemporary global issues, drawing inspiration from His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

Since 2013, under its Hum Kadam: Education for Peace Initiative, WISCOMP has been engaging with the youth from Kashmir and Delhi-NCR regions by organizing face to face dialogues and workshops to fulfil the following objectives:

- Facilitate experiential learning from self and others;
- Introduce theoretical knowledge from the evolving discipline of peace and conflict studies;
- Teach nonviolent communication skills;
- Promote values such as human dignity, human rights, compassion, empathy, partnership and community;
- Motivate individuals to commit themselves to peacebuilding at multiple levels – within the home, in their communities and in society; and
- Empower young people to value, democracy, pluralism and active coexistence.

The PeaceJam conference provided an opportunity to share the experiences of this initiative with a wider network of schools. It was hoped that the conference programme will motivate other schools to start similar programmes that engender peace across faultlines of region, religion, class, caste and gender.
About PeaceJam

The PeaceJam programme was initiated in 1996 with an aim to create young leaders who are committed to bring out positive change in themselves, their communities and the world through inspiration of the Nobel Peace Laureates who pass on the spirit, skills and wisdom to the young people. An annual conference which is held in different regions of the world, brings together young people of 5-25 years of age in association with one of the Noble Peace Laureates for an interactive session where the young people get an opportunity to learn from the experiences of the Noble Laureates. The prime focus of the conferences is leadership development amongst the youth. According to Dawn Engle and Ivan Suvanjueff, the founders of the PeaceJam Foundation, the intersection of education, (through curriculum design and trainings); inspiration (gained through interactions with the Nobel Peace Laureates) and action (through engagements in the community service projects) initiate the process of ‘change’ for a more peaceful world.

The Collaboration

WISCOMP and PeaceJam came together for the conference to encourage the youth to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes to build peace. To meet this goal, PeaceJam developed its methodology based on the idea that personal contact with Nobel Laureates makes a lasting impact on the young minds. The conference was an attempt to stimulate critical thinking, research skills and promote reflection among the participants.

This was PeaceJam’s first engagement in India. The goals of the Conference were:

• To make the participants understand the scope, purpose and opportunities for youth education and action;
• Build the participants’ ability to define the concepts and different dimensions of peace and peacemaking;

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Collectively determine qualities and core values of peacemaking in schools, neighbourhood and the world;

Enable the participants to compare and contrast their ideas of peace with that of the Nobel Peace Laureates’;

Create awareness about His Holiness’ view on motivation, compassion, human family, ecology and global responsibility to gain understanding of his approach to peace;

Gain knowledge of Tibet and Tibetan culture;

Be active problem solvers and peacemakers through service projects.

As a pre-conference preparation, the schools were asked to initiate a discussion on the ideas of His Holiness; his non-violent struggle for Tibet, his ideas of peace and compassion and his experiences as a Nobel Peace Laureate, through classroom discussions and movie screenings.

In preparation of the conference, on March 18, 2015, a pre-selected group of young adults attended a capacity building workshop on mentorship so that they could lead the discussions for the school participants on the days of the conference and be motivated to mentor young entrants into the fold of peacebuilding. The training was conducted by the PeaceJam Team of Penpa Dolma and Adam Breasley. The young mentors were to lead those sessions at the conference which required small group engagement and in depth deliberation.

The initial phase of training was directed at engaging with peacemaking skills, like teamwork, leadership, non-violence, trust building, etc. through interactive activities. It was also an opportunity to learn about the work and experiences of His Holiness through movie screening and small group discussions. The conference engaged with three different groups: school students, young adults (as Mentors to the school students) and teachers. The second part of the conference aimed at preparing the participants for their interaction with His Holiness, during which each of the participating schools was asked to share their community service project which the students and the teachers planned to undertake together.

The Emcee for the conference, Brett Engle welcomed the young participants, teachers and mentors enthusiastically, following which
the founders, Dawn Engle and Ivan Suvanjuieff shared the journey of PeaceJam Foundation through a short film, explaining their objectives and what they looked forward to in India. Rajiv Mehrotra, Secretary, Foundation for Universal Responsibility, thanked PeaceJam for partnering with WISCOMP, FAEA and FUR. He shared His Holiness’ vision for youth in India and their role in building peace across faultlines of caste, class, region, religion and genders. He foregrounded the rich history and lived reality of India’s multicultural ethos and welcomed the educators from across the city and the participants from schools in Kashmir. He encouraged the participants to engage and interact across institutions and make the most of the learning opportunity. The conference started on a very energetic note with singing, dancing and a series of group activities around building trust.
Conference Structure

During the conference, the PeaceJam Foundation followed its *Ambassadors Programme* which is a curriculum designed for students between the ages of 14-19 years. The programme seeks to prepare young leaders to commit to positive change in themselves, their communities and the world at large through the mentorship. The curriculum was designed to train the young adults to work around the issues of peace, violence, oppression and social injustices. The conference provided them with an opportunity to study and gain from the life experiences and ideas of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and to implement the *Global Call for Action Projects* within their schools. The Ambassador Programme centres on the following core ideas:

- Connect youth with the Nobel Peace Laureate through case study method and youth conferences;
- Apprenticeship in peacemaking through action inspired by the Nobel Peace Laureates;
- Spirit of enquiry, exploration and open mindedness;
- Collaboration, social innovation and civil discourse; and
- Youth as 21st century leaders and agents of positive change.

PeaceJam believes in the tremendous energy which the young generation embodies which can contribute to making the world a peaceful place, if channelized in a meaningful manner. They have been working in this direction by educating the youth, inspiring them and honing leadership potential.

*Education:* The PeaceJam curriculum aims at stimulating critical thinking skills and to inculcate the ability to reflect over the root causes of a conflict and gain knowledge on non-violence as a methodology to address conflicts. It is also to educate the young participants on the

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3 His Holiness, The Dalai Lama’s experiences with the struggle for Tibet was the Case Study for the New Delhi conference, 2015.
lived experiences of the Nobel Laureates, their ideas and vision for a more peaceful world.

**Inspiration:** PeaceJam gives its participants an opportunity to interact with one of the 13 Nobel Laureates, who have consented to be connected with PeaceJam Foundation’s programs and discuss with them some of the global problems. It aims at understanding the challenges which the Nobel Laureates overcame while working for their communities and how they stand up against the negative forces to address the issues they are passionate about.

![Diagram](image.png)

*Source: PeaceJam website (www.peacejam.org)*

**Action:** PeaceJam programs are premised on the idea that the education and the motivation to work which is gained through an interaction with the Nobel Laureate surfaces when the youth engage in action projects. They entrust the capacity of youth to create and implement projects which address the root causes of the issues and be a part of the PeaceJam’s *One Billion Acts of Peace* global citizen’s campaign.

The conference focused on skill development, team building and critical reflection among the participants through:

- **Group Discussions:** Workshops and Family Group sessions gave the participants an opportunity to think, write and talk about the concepts and issues of peace, violence and His Holiness’s work through discussion and sharing.

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4 PeaceJam Foundation, 2014, p.11.
Film Screening: The short films screened during the conference gave an insight into His Holiness’s peaceful struggle for the rights of Tibetan people, the experiences of the Tibetan population, their idea of non-violent struggle and reconciliation, among others. It was directed to engage the participants in a critical evaluation of the Nobel Laureate’s ideas and to have a dialogue with him regarding some of these concerns during the later part of the conference.

Leadership Skills: Various activities held during the conference, like that of human chain, chair pullers, etc. directed toward educating the participants on the leadership and trust building.

Citizenship and Service Projects: Service-learning is a central component of the PeaceJam curriculum and each of the activities held: workshops, Family Group sessions and Community service-project session asked the youth to apply their knowledge and skills to address some of the pressing issues in their local communities by creating an action-project on one of the thematic areas in the One Billion Acts of Peace campaign.
The Process

Mentor Training

PeaceJam uses an interactive methodology while preparing the young generation to be peacemakers in their schools and communities. It engages in empowering the young adults to be ‘mentors’ for those younger than them as they begin their journey as peacemakers. For the PeaceJam conferences, ‘mentors’ are the crucial connectors between the participants and the organizers and facilitate the activities during the family groups. The mentors are selected on the basis of their work in community peacemaking activities.

At the Delhi conference, some of them were trained under the mentorship of WISCOMP for its *Hum Kadam: Education for Peace* initiative, while others were young adults who are part of the various initiatives in Dharmasala and Himachal Pradesh supporting community activities and Tibet’s non-violent freedom struggle. All the mentors of the workshop were already practitioners of peacemaking and had been involved in non-violent peace initiatives.

The mentors-to-be for the conference were provided space to design the break out of the group exercises on the first day of the conference. The training session for the mentors, which was held on March 18, 2015 at the India Habitat Centre, New Delhi gave a run through of all the activities which were to be conducted on the conference days and were assigned their specific roles. Since most of the mentors were meeting for the first time, the training session also gave them a space to know each other, especially the co-mentors of their Family Groups.

Given the fact that young students have an easy accessibility of information due to emergence of varied forms of media, it becomes all the more important that they are educated to reflect upon the issues through self-engagement and are able to weigh the evidences and conclude for themselves\(^5\). The conference engaged in training the students to be able to use critical lens to view pertinent concerns of

contemporary times, with changes in nature of conflicts in the 21st century which asks for new ideas and approaches to build peace. In this respect, the mentors were briefed on certain ways that would compel the students to reflect upon the issues discussed during the Family Group meetings in a critical manner.

As a part of the training, the mentors were asked to focus on four broad areas and use various interactive methodologies to engage their Family Group members. These were:

- Explore the concepts and skills of peace and peacemaking as well as violence and non-violence;
- Examine the case study of His Holiness the Dalai Lama;
- Discuss and reflect upon the theme: *Cultivating Compassion and Peace*; and
- Design their peace-plans through community engagement service projects.

The trainers also asked the mentors to be intriguing in their approach while engaging with the students during the conference so as to keep up their enthusiasm throughout. A compassionate bond between the mentors which was created during the training sessions was reflected

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throughout the conference activities, which further provided positive environment for the students’ learning.

**Family Groups**

The discussions on varied ideas of peace and non-violence were led by the mentors within their Family Groups. These were smaller groups which comprised of 10-12 students led by two mentors each. It was ensured that each Family Group comprised of students from different schools and regions to bring diverse experiences into the discussion.

During the conference, the participants met in their Family Groups twice. While the first Family Group session aimed at knowing the group members, defining the Family Group norms, discussing the laureate and preparing for the workshops which were scheduled for the later part of the day; the second session discussed the laureate in detail and engaged in community reflection through interactive exercises. Several name-games were played during the first Family Group exercise like Name Toss, This is my dance and Positive Adjectives, which enabled the students to know one another and prepare them for further activities.

The Family Groups discussed and explored certain key questions, some of which were:

- What does peace mean to the students?
- What according to them are different causes of violence in their neighbourhood, communities, schools, etc.?

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8 For Name Toss, the groups were made to stand in a circle and everyone said their names. A mentor said someone’s name, threw the ball to them and then they said someone else’s name throwing the ball towards them. This continued till everyone had an opportunity to play. The ball then went around again with everyone throwing the ball to the different persons.
9 The participants were made to stand in circle, facing the centre and were instructed to create a personal ‘dance’ which represents their name or personality. A person was randomly picked up and said “My name is (blank) and this is my favourite dance” and demonstrated their dance. The group then said in unison, “His/her name is (blank) and this is his/her dance” and demonstrated the first person’s dance move. This continued until each person in the circle has given their name and dance.
10 The group was made to sit in a circle and one person said a positive adjective that had the first letter as the first letter of their name, e.g. Happy Hanna or Amazing Anne. The next person repeated the adjective and name and added their own.
• How are individual’s idea of peace and violence different from that of the group?
• How do they connect the instances of violence at the local level with the on-going global experiences?
• What could be the different strategies of peacemaking?
• A reflection over His Holiness the Dalai Lama’s ideas of peace and non-violence.

The mentors played an important role in leading the discussions. While allowing everyone to express their opinions, it was also important for the mentors that the enthusiasm and curiosity among the participants was maintained. Unanimously determining the Family Group norms, most of the groups agreed upon a meaningful debate on the issues raised and to accept the different perspectives that came before them. Active listening became one of the guiding principles while conducting the discussions. The mentors tried to deliberate upon the possible solutions, allowing the participants to get a sense of the issues in a holistic manner. There was also a conscious effort made by the mentors to encourage the participants to maintain originality in their ideas and positions, and not get influenced by the perceptions and reactions of others in the group. The purpose of the discussion was to understand the key concepts and ideas through peer-learning and critical study of multiple perspectives on the issues rather than focusing on a definite conclusion11. It was also to recognize that peacemaking, as a field of study accepts more than one truth and more than one method of resolution.

The mentors engaged the participants in the Huggy Tag12 game to discuss the issues in their communities and their possible solutions which they were to present to His Holiness during their interaction. In the first round of the game, the mentors asked the participants to reflect over some positive attributes about their communities and on a call of “3” the participants ran to form groups of 3 and shared their reflections within these smaller groups. In the second round, the mentor called out “2” and in groups of 2, participants shared what in their opinion was the most pressing issue which their community was facing and in

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11 PeaceJam Foundation, 1997, p.4-5.
12 PeaceJam Foundation, 2015.
the group of “4” they shared the possible ways of resolving the issues in the community. The exercise allowed the participants to deliberate upon different issues faced in different communities and understand the similarities and differences in each of the community, while at the same time they also discussed the various possible solutions to address these issues.

The various activities and discussions gave the participants an opportunity to study the concepts of inclusion and exclusion; prejudice, biases, discrimination and conflicts based on identity differences, in the context of their communities, relating them to the global problems.

The conference also gave an opportunity to the participants to interact with His Holiness the Dalai Lama and to learn from his unique approach towards building peace. Students presented their community service projects to His Holiness and also asked questioned him on the practice of compassion and peace in their daily lives.

For the first part of the conference, the participants learnt about His Holiness’s work and his ideas on peace and non-violence. As a part of the Dalai Lama Activity, a short film on the Dalai Lama’s principles of compassion and universal responsibility was screened. The film was followed by a reflection exercise where participants discussed how His Holiness’s message was inspiring to them; various ways of expressing compassion to themselves, friends, family and others; with whom is it most difficult for them to be compassionate; and what in their opinion is their universal responsibility; among others.

During the Family Group sessions, the participants deliberated upon some of his ideas and discussed how they relate to them and also how would they incorporate the learnings in their daily lives. The mentors engaged in a brief discussion on him, for which the groups adopted ‘learning by sharing’ method. One of the participants started by sharing what he/she knows about His Holiness’s work and ideas, and the next person in a circle kept adding to the pool of knowledge. In this manner, the groups discussed the Nobel Laureate’s past and current work and what made him win the Nobel Peace Prize. At the end of the discussions, the participants came up with certain questions which they would like to ask His Holiness during the interaction.
Teachers’ Training

At a session that ran concurrent to the Family Groups for student participants and mentors during the conference, 20 teachers who participated as representatives of the schools engaged in a group discussion with PeaceJam facilitator Adam Breasley. The objective of the discussion was to provide space for the teachers to share the initiatives and programmes which the different schools were currently undertaking in their communities and were linked to the Global Call for Action thematic areas.

The session began with each of the teacher introducing herself/himself and one representative teacher from each school sharing a brief summary of the current initiatives. The initiatives of the schools included the following:

- **Running environmental campaigns**: Concern over environmental sustainability was a common theme for many of the schools. They were undertaking cleanliness drives in the neighbourhood, drives for the protection of bio-diversity near the school locations as well as in the fragile eco-zones, awareness drives on the protection and restoration of river eco-systems like that of Yamuna river in Delhi and Jhelum river in Kashmir, campaigns to discourage use of polythene bags, among others.

- **Support for developmental needs of marginalized groups**: Many teachers shared that since poverty and lack of educational opportunities was a serious issue for India, they were providing support to young children in the neighbourhood by volunteering time for academic success, donating resources in the form of books, stationary, toys and sports equipment, assisting in state-run health awareness drives.

- **Conflict resolution and peace building**: Some of the representative teachers shared that their school was involved in building conflict resolution skills among their students but this was undertaken on a limited scale in a select group of schools.

It was observed that most of the programmes that were being run by schools looked at building peace or community work as an act of giving back to the society but in most cases they were paternalistic in their
tenor. Only one group of teachers shared that through this work their students learnt a great deal ‘about’ life from the circumstances of the marginalized groups.

Breasley shared with the teachers the need to disseminate information about these initiatives on the web as much of the news coming out of the region focused on negative stories. If the schools shared these positive stories, people in other parts of the world will be able to gain a better sense of the work that was being undertaken in South Asia and also motivate the students to do more. He also shared with the teachers some ideas on strengthening the mentoring of the students in these areas. The need for student involvement in the selection of the projects and not just their implementation was highlighted by one of the participating teachers.

The Workshops

During the conference, parallel workshops were conducted on certain topics which gave insights into different approaches to address conflicts at various levels: personal, relational or structural. Students and mentors were asked to join one of the workshops which interested them. Some of the workshops stressed upon imparting skills for community engagement, like that of dialogue, role plays or through sharing of experiences of on-going interventions, on the other hand some workshops talked about how to deal with the issues at the personal level which further contributes towards addressing larger community level concerns through meditation and yoga. Each of the workshops was interactive and deliberated upon the importance of an intervention which is non-violent in nature.

The workshop conducted by Adam Breasley on ‘Biodiversity or GMOs (Genetically Modified Organisms): Will the Future of Nutrition be in Women’s Hands or Under Corporate Control?’ dwelt on the importance of bringing women back to their historical roles as the primary growers of food and care takers of the nutrition, which has been disrupted by corporate houses in the recent past. To rectify their acts, these companies have come up with GMOs which attenuates the crisis. In this context, Breasley talked about some of the grassroots initiatives which have countered GMOs, one of which is Navdanya, a network of seed producers and organic producers spread across 17 Indian states.
Penpa Dolma’s session on ‘Mediation and Mindfulness’ was designed in the context of the prevailing conditions when there are constant changes in the ‘external’ world without much happening within the mind. The mind remains untrained, uncompassionate and ignorant, making the task of bringing peace and harmony in the world extremely difficult. Stressing upon the need to understand the ‘external’ world without the feeling of frustration and disappointment; the workshop introduced the basics of the mediation, techniques, application, along with some actual practice. The facilitator also discussed how one can engage in embodying this wisdom and practice compassion in daily life.

Tenzin Loden talked about the integration of the practice of Tibetan Astro Science and medicine with modern science, which seems to overrule the former due to the advancements in technology. In his session, ‘Tibetan Astro Science and Medicine: Ancient Traditions for the Modern World’, Loden bought on the table the importance of these indigenous practices which allow a person to maintain a balance within the body and in the environment, which could be important in addressing health related concerns as well.

Another session was conducted on ‘Yoga for Everyday Life’ by Brett Engle. The practice of yoga as the source of strength, flexibility and concentration, he introduced the basic postures to his participants, which could be used in the everyday life to feel grounded and connected to the earth.

Jaya Iyer’s session on ‘Activism for Creative and Compassionate Change’ gave the participants an insight into social activism, which she explained to be the process where the community engages in bringing out a change in the collective lives through real awareness and acts of empathy. The workshop explored the possibilities of theatre and allied arts as a method to empower the community for dialogue. For her session, she introduced interactive games, role plays and theatre to participants which they could use in their communities to raise serious social and environmental issues.
Community Engagement: *One Billion Acts of Peace*

Moving from ‘Peacemaking through Training’ to ‘Peacemaking in Action’, the conference provided a space to design interventions for community engagements. For this, the participants were re-shuffled into groups which were formed in accordance with the issues that were considered to be most pressing in their community and they would wish to work further. PeaceJam enlists 10 areas which ask for an immediate deliberation, identified by the 13 Nobel Laureates together to make the world a peaceful place. The 10 areas of *One Billion Acts of Peace Issue Areas* were:\(^{13}\):

**Women and Children:** Focused on the need to end the exploitation of children, women and girls around the world and promote their roles as leaders.

**Water and Food for all:** It was believed that every person should have enough clean water to drink and enough food to eat.

**Caring for Our Communities:** Asks to shift money and resources from weapons of war towards building true human security through schools, jobs, healthcare and community.

**Global Health and Wellness:** Stresses on the need to be concerned for each other’s wellness because we are one human family and disease has no boundaries.

**Environmental Sustainability:** Understands climate Change as a reality and the need to clean up the earth’s rivers, oceans, air and land, and care for all plants and animals that share this planet.

**Resolving Conflicts:** Argues that as the children of a culture of violence, we are taught to lash out with violence instead of solving problems through compromise and non-violence.

**Inclusivity:** As many people are treated badly because of how they look, where they live, or how they act, it is time to move beyond hatred, prejudice and racism that divides people.

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\(^{13}\) Source: PeaceJam website (www.peacejam.org)
**Human Rights:** Basic human rights need to be protected for all people, ensuring their rights to participate in government, have safe working conditions, earn a living and worship freely.

**Ending Extreme Poverty:** Billions of people live in less than $1 per day, without access to even the most basic levels of shelter, sustenance or education. But at the same time it is believed that extreme poverty can be eliminated in our lifetime.

**Weapons:** The world still spends nearly a trillion dollar each year on the weapons of war. This expenditures on both nuclear and conventional weapons, only serves to increase the likelihood of armed conflict.

The identified themes provided the participants possible areas for intervention in their communities. The mentors facilitated the discussion on community engagement project in the areas in which they had expertise. They helped the groups identify their potential issues within the identified theme through newspapers and internet search. Further, the groups brainstormed various ways through which they could address the issue in their respective communities, under the guidance of the mentors. For instance, the group which worked on resolving conflicts decided to address the problem of linguistic violence by learning the basics of non-violent communication skills.

At the end of the exercise, the participants chose from the 10 themes which were laid down by the Nobel Laureates and sketched their potential community projects. While designing the projects, participants were asked to address certain questions, which would direct them towards a meaningful and doable project. Some of these were14:

- What is the issue in school/community which they would want to address?
- Why is the issue important to the group and how do they relate it to peacemaking?
- What are the strategies that they plan to use to make a difference?
- What are the possible outcomes they look at through their strategies?

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What skills and other resources would they require for implementing the strategies?

When and where do they plan to implement the strategies?

How do they plan to evaluate the project?

Since schools were identified as the sight for intervention, later the participants in consultation with their school educators bought together the ideas gained form the group exercises to formulate the Community Service Projects. These projects were presented to His Holiness on the following day\textsuperscript{15}.

\textsuperscript{15} Refer to the ‘Conclusions’ for the details on each of the projects.
A participant welcomed His Holiness the Dalai Lama on behalf of everyone present. She briefly shared the key leanings from the first half of the conference: raise voice for honesty and truth, as well as against injustice and greed; understand things from more than one perspective; and love and ‘give’ unconditionally. Quoting His Holiness she said, ‘love and compassion are necessities, not luxuries’. She also shared that understanding of compassion and forgiveness had been the key take away for the participants.

His Holiness began the interaction with a brief talk in which he stressed the importance of creating a sense of oneness among the seven billion people who reside on the planet and drawing similarity amongst them. He explained that each human being depends on his/her parents, especially the mothers for their care. This basic need for survival and significance of care and love in human life blurs the distinction between the people from east or west; north or south; believer or non-believer and brings them together as humans.

He further elaborated that humans are social animals and friendship is an essential requirement of human happiness. The interdependence of people is a contemporary reality and that an individual’s happiness is
derived from that of his/her family; neighbours and the community at large. Without genuine friendship, one tends to feel lonely and helpless deep inside; therefore it is important that one connects with others at this basic human level. He stressed that circles of friendship can be expanded when one realizes the sameness of experience of the entire humanity and the fact that attributes like trust, love and affection are the real basis for friendship and not faith, profession, economic means which actually seem more pronounced. We need to start looking at them as secondary determinants of difference.

He discussed how in the present times not much space is given to the deeper values of human life. The existing modern and secular education system have directed human lives to strive towards accumulation of money and power by neglecting the moral principles. This has led to corruption and other acts of ‘cheating others’ a common practice. He explained that the acts of killings in the present times are a result of the demarcation made between ‘we’ and ‘they’ which creates a sense of negligence towards ‘the other’ and a kind of self-centred attitude. The emphasis laid on the secondary level of differences, forgetting the oneness of human beings leads to these problems. He expressed his concern over the differences among the people (referring to that of Shia and Sunni among the Muslim brothers and sisters who pray to the same God), which lead them to kill one another. He emphasized that these differences were small. In the contemporary times when there is a high level of interdependence, to believe that one’s victory is at the cost of others, is short-sightedness and narrow thinking and therefore one needs to think of self-interest in an expansive sense.

His Holiness then expressed the desire to have a discussion with the young participants rather than delivering a monologue. Participants raised a wide spectrum of questions to His Holiness, from that on homosexuality to the importance of science and technology; to friendship and compassion; and even his political ideas. Referring to one of His Holiness’s previous discussions where he stated homosexuality as a sexual misconduct, a participant requested him to express his views on the same. To this, His Holiness answered that it was dependent on the religious faith/practice an individual followed. For example, he said, according to Buddhism it would be considered sexual misconduct for a monk. However, at the same time he expressed that if one engaged in sexual misconduct, it would not make the person
a non-Buddhist or non-Christian or non-Hindu. Similarly each faith
tradition has its own precepts on this issue and as a believer one should
be guided by that. However, he also observed that for those who are
non-believers, homosexuality was not proscribed. It was entirely
dependent on an individual to decide these things ultimately.

Another participant asked how would one find a genuine friend? His
Holiness explained that it requires a lot of patience. In order to be able
to decide who is genuine there is a need to give the friend some time
and the conclusion should be with an unbiased mindset. He further
averred that a person who helps in the most difficult times is definitely
a trust-worthy friend. He explained that this would also require some
level of trust, compassion, honesty and love from one’s own side
towards the friend.

The same participant asked His Holiness why he thinks he would be
the last Dalai Lama of Tibet. His Holiness explained that the institution
of the Dalai Lama was developed almost six centuries back and had
been instrumental in both spread of Buddhist principles and political
system of Tibet till the last century. But it was not important that
everything that developed at a point in time became permanent. As
early as in 1969, he had formally announced that the institution of the
Dalai Lama shall not continue for the Tibetan people, but if the
circumstances change, the institution may also continue. In 2011, he
had taken a decision to retire from his political responsibilities and
since then Tibetans have an elected parliament to address their political
concerns. Recounting his formal statements in the past, he mentioned
that if the 15th Dalai Lama was identified, then he would not be vested
with any political powers. On the prospects of a female Dalai Lama,
he expressed that if there is a possibility of this, then it would happen
naturally.

A participant requested His Holiness to explain how an individual could
be selfless. She elaborated that when something is done for someone
else it gives a sense of happiness to oneself, and this happiness makes
her question the selfless nature of any act.

His Holiness described how helping others give satisfaction to a person.
He said, a sense of concern of other’s well-being provides one with
inner strength, psychologically as well as emotionally. At the same
time for one’s own survival, one has to take care of oneself, and be selfish. But he pointed out that this should be a ‘wise kind of selfishness rather than being a foolish selfish. So taking care of others is the best way to care for one’s owns self’.

He observed that scientifically also it had been proven that the feelings of anger and insecurity weaken the immunity system of a person. The best way, according to him to keep mental and physical health, is through concern for others wellbeing and cultivating a compassionate attitude. This way, one becomes happier and gains trust of more and more people. The selfless nature of an action comes from ‘concern for others wellbeing and compassionate attitude’ even if it gives happiness to the person engaging in the action.

One participant asked His Holiness if the advancement of science and technology is helpful or harmful for the existence of humanity.

His Holiness responded to this by explaining that he feels science has been very helpful. He mentioned that he admired the genuine scientists because of their un-biased attitude and open-mindedness. Their findings are based on reason which is established after thorough experimentation. Scientific innovation has led to the existence of weapons and according to His Holiness, there is nothing wrong with innovation, but the onus to use them in a just manner lies with the people, science itself cannot be blamed for actions that people take to harm others.

Referring to progress in science, he also talked about how psychology as a field of study was part of ancient Indian scholarly works and very well developed in his view. Modern psychology was at a comparatively nascent stage. Modern science has very recently expanded itself to include human study with consideration of inner and the deeper emotions along with the study of the physical world. Sharing his own experiences, he suggested that one must engage in investigation and critical reflection, which are essential parts of scientific exploration.

Continuing the discussion, another participant enquired if religion and science can cooperate to work together in the present times.

His Holiness shared that religion and reason must go together, where reason represents science. Here he clarified the difference between theistic and atheistic religions. Ancient Indian religions, Jainism and Buddhism believe in self-creation and there is no concept of God. Then
there are other religions in which God/creator is central. Elaborating on the Law of *Karma* (or the Law of Causality) in Buddhism, he explained that one needs to believe in himself and take care of one’s mental attitude to realize one’s *karma*. But, most of the time one sees that people interpret *karma* in such a manner that it kills their enthusiasm and makes them lazy.

Further, a participant questioned His Holiness how would one know when to forgive someone. His Holiness explained to the students that forgiveness neither should be equated to forgetting nor it means that one accepts a wrong/unjust action. Forgiveness is about not developing a sense of hatred or anger against the wrong doer and for the unjust action one has to take counter measures. Thus, one has to create a distinction between the person and the action.

In the context of the increasing experiences of terrorist activities in the world, a participant questioned as to what would be the best possible way towards peace while addressing these terrorist outfits which otherwise refuse to respond to peaceful approaches.

His Holiness opined that terrorist organizations are consequences of previous mistakes or past negligence. He said that there is a need to emphasize inner peace, particularly through the education system (which is based on scientific findings and not religious teachings). It’s due to the belief that force is the ultimate decision maker that one completely neglects inner values in the field of education, and therefore such unfortunate events take place. Since little space is given to reasoning, therefore a long term solution for *how to build humanity* and *how to lessen the sufferings* can be found by spreading importance of love and compassion as there are no quick fixes for this problem.

In this context, he talked about the idea of secularism and averred that India should take steps in this direction. The concept of secularism in India is very different from the prevailing conceptualization in the West. According to the Indian practices, secularism is about respecting all religions and also non-believers. It’s through secular education which is based on common experiences, common sense and scientific findings, that one can be made to understand the importance of inner values. He emphasized that the young participants like those present before him
had the responsibility to address these concerns and make significant contributions to the rest of the world.

Bringing forth his confusion, a participant asked His Holiness to explain his idea of non-violence in relation to Chanakya’s idea that ‘it is important to destroy one’s enemy before the enemy destroys him’. What should one opt for: surrender in front of the enemy and face humiliation in front of the world or should one use force to reclaim what is rightfully theirs?

His Holiness used the example of the Tibetan peoples’ struggle to provide an answer. He said it was important to make a distinction between China as part of the big human family, the Chinese people, the Chinese government and even within the government, one needed to differentiate the hardliners from the moderate people. One could not understand China as a homogenous category. According to His Holiness, the problems have actually been created by the hardline thinkers, who lack the knowledge of reality and the society. It’s a sad situation since over the last seven decades, they have been exposed to one-sided information which has made them completely ignorant of the realities. The problem lies in the distorted information which is mainly linked to ignorance and self-centred attitude. Therefore, to consider Chinese people as the enemy and develop negative feelings against them would be self-destructive.

Same holds true for the Muslim fundamentalists, if they are considered the enemies and a wall of distinction is created, distinguishing ‘us’ from ‘them’, then the possibility of bringing change is reduced. It’s important that one tries to bring them together as human brothers and sisters.

Further, one participant questioned His Holiness about the mindset of a person while he performs an act of violence.

Education and secular ideas, according to His Holiness play an important role in allowing one to move beyond the self-centred attitude and perceive reality. Education can expose people to more than one perspective. He qualified the statement by mentioning that some of the trouble makers in the past and in present have been very educated and intelligent people, who manipulated and took advantage of others. In
order to curb this, education should combine moral ethics with development of human intelligence so that the two work together and convince individuals about the importance of benefiting others. Along with this, developing an unbiased attitude is another important aspect. It’s crucial to understand that there exist several truths and not just one that we hold to be true. Therefore, as one looks more openly, the narrow minded attitude changes.

The interaction with His Holiness concluded with students presenting their community service project ideas to him.
Conclusion

The two-day conference brought together school students, young adults and educators to understand the importance of peace in the contemporary times. It was also an opportunity to explore some of the possible ways to bring peace under the leadership of His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

The participants learnt different ways to make both external and internal peace, by\textsuperscript{16}:

- Understanding direct interventions required for stopping the ongoing instances of violence at interpersonal, community, national and international levels;
- Building infrastructures for long term peace through neighbourhood youth organizations, at schools, economic development and healthy physical environment;
- Through personal acts of peace, though listening, sharing, respecting others, settling disputes peacefully and managing anger; and
- Becoming a peaceful person by practicing compassion, patience, forgiveness, empathy, healing and joy.

As a part of the One Billion Acts of Peace, the schools presented various community service projects which they envisioned based on the learnings from the conference and presented them to His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

**Richmond Global School, New Delhi** chose to work on the awareness of human rights, by using a variety of tools such as rallies, action and service, with a participation of 400 students.

**Salwan Girls’ School, New Delhi** focused on women rights and children. They planned a street play discussing the importance of women and children’s rights in the society, with participation of 5 families.

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\textsuperscript{16} PeaceJam Foundation, 1997, p. 21.
**Army Public School, Srinagar** wished to stand up to address the conflicts that the world is experiencing and to work on eradication of corruption from modern society. They felt that education of youth about their duties, their responsibilities along with the rights was an immediate need in this direction and targeted 1000 young people.

**Mount Abu Public School, Rohini** took up the issues of environmental sustainability in relation with poverty. The school planned to donate the money generated from selling recycled newspapers towards the welfare of the underprivileged children and set up portable toilets in the slum areas from the money collected from selling the school scrap.

**Step-by-Step School, NOIDA** wished to work on the elevation of extreme poverty by identifying a slum area and targeting 7-8 families, approximately 30 people. They proposed a two-levelled action plan: One, briefly sharing the aims and objectives of the project and understanding their concerns and secondly, to understand the availability and quality of food and water to the families. Based on the information collected, further plan for action will be decided.

**St. Mary School, New Delhi** proposed to undertake a project on ‘caring for our communities’ and planned to initiate programs such as vocational training for women after school hours and adopting a slum to reach out to more people. Their target for the year was to help at least 150 people.

**G. D. Goenka School, New Delhi** took up a project on the LGBT rights and focused on the youth through awareness campaigns and workshops. There are approximately 2000 students in the school and they wished to involve all of them.

**Bal Bharti School, Rohini** intended to do a project on environment sustainability by initiating a neighbourhood cleanliness drive, which will be managed by the students and supported by their parents. A group of 200 students would be trained for the same.

**Delhi Public School, Gurgoan** wanted to do a project in the field of educational, by providing quality education to the economically weaker sections of the society, based on the provisions of the RTE. They wished to identify four villages of Gurgaon as their sites for action.
Pathways World School, Aravali proposed to initiate action on the topic of resolving conflicts, where they would be covering conflicts pertaining to human rights, women and children, water scarcity and food. Under the project, the school wanted to initiate a blog where some of the issues could be discussed. The blog was innovative in a way that focus was to seek solutions which could be implemented by the students themselves. They aimed at creating awareness in a way that the audience could connect with it, through platforms like Facebook.

Delhi Public School, Srinagar wished to work on a ‘Youth Counselling and Crisis Centre’, which worked closely with all the other schools to provide multifaceted treatment to the youth. They aimed at reaching out to 200 people.

Tibetan Village School, Dehradun proposed a project on environment and expressed their commitment to work towards conservation of nature.

Happy Days School, Shivpuri took a project on ‘care for communities’, with a focus on education. They had taken up some of the challenges which were faced in the villages and planned to spend their weekends educating the children in these villages.

Bluebells School International, New Delhi took up the concern of advancement of women and children in various fields. Inspired by the ideas of His Holiness and the RTE, they proposed to establish self-help groups for the women and children, which was to come in effect in June 2015. They mainly targeted women and children from the underprivileged sections of the society. Their plan of action was to include students from grades 8-10 and form a core team of students from grade 11 and 12, which will provide vocational training for women and remedial classes for children.

Vasant Valley School, New Delhi expressed their concern over the acceptance of cultural diversity. They planned to use the essentials and the life skills programs which are already in place in the school to spread awareness within the school about the various cultural differences. They wished to introduce the same for the younger children. They also wanted to work on teacher training programs, where the teachers teach in the schools of the nearby slums schools.
Salwan Public School, Mayur Vihar presented a project on inclusivity and cooperation. They planned to arrange a fest annually to promote awareness about different cultures and people being bullied and victims of racism.

Springdales School, Dhaula Kuan took up ‘women and children’s rights’ as their area of engagement. Through the community service program they wished to work in the nearby village areas for the development and protection of women and children’s rights. Students from senior school and teachers would be conducting sessions on vocational training to them and would encourage others in the school to donate books.

Sanskriti School, New Delhi chose inclusivity as the key area for the service project. Through a series of awareness programs, campaigns, debates and interactions they planned to address the issues of bullying and other sorts of discrimination in the school to promote a positive change which would result in an inclusive and cooperative society.

His Holiness expressed that each of the idea presented had great potential, but at the same time it is important they are turned into action. Sharing his experiences, he explained it is important that they remain determined throughout the process. “All your plans depend upon your self-confidence and determination. These things are not easily achieved, without constant effort and determination. Any work that ultimately benefits the society, the society will support and you will ultimately succeed”.

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Profiles of the Facilitators

Adam Breasley is from Australia and has been involved with Navdanya since attending their annual Gandhi and Globalisation course in India in 2005. In 2014, he launched ‘Our Seeds, Our Future’ which is a series of events in Indonesia to raise awareness about food sovereignty.

Brett Engle grew up in PeaceJam from the age of 10, watching its birth as his mother turned this crazy dream into reality, and participating in every capacity, from videographer to emcee, as he attended conferences around the world. His first passion is his practice of yoga, and finding a way to be of service to the planet in all that he does.

Jaya Iyer has over two and a half decades of experience in the world of art, social development and ecological integrity through theatre, education, social action, organizational development, self-work and spirituality. She has worked extensively with NGOs, government supported autonomous institutions, universities, community groups and individuals.

Penpa Dolma owes her life and happiness to the teachings of Buddha and his manifestation in person in today’s time, His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama. Her life’s purpose is to follow Buddha’s teaching wholeheartedly and serve the rest of existence to her best ability.

Tenzin Loden did his schooling from Tibetan Children’s Village with a major in Science stream. He also served the school as a volunteer teacher for 5 months. He then joined Tibetan Medical and Astro College where he studied Tibetan Astro Science for five years. From March 2014, he was appointed as the lecturer of Tibetan Astro Science at the college. He has taken part in four PeaceJam conferences.
List of Mentors

Diksha Poddar
Akorshi Sengupta
Mukarram Wahid
Rinzin Doma
Lobsang Yangtso
Tenzin Dolma
Udyen Choedup
Thinly Dhondup
Ginmuan Khuptong
Alena Bhutia
Tenzin Wangmo
Chimee Yudro Ngoche
Tenzin Dolma
Tashi
Tenzin Dhargyal
Tsering Ngawang
Chodak
Tenzin Gyurmey
Wangchen Dorjee
Neha Gupta
List of Participants

**Delhi Public School, Srinagar**
Teacher: Huzaira Pandit
Aamina Hameed
Anusha Wani
Faisal Romshoo
Minha Farooq
Peerzada Talish
Tehleel Nazir

**Army Public School, Srinagar**
Teacher: Sabreen Mushtaq
Alina Mir
Aryan Bhat
Kiranjot Singh
Mehak Nasir
Rahul Bhat
Tanzeel Zehra

**Delhi Public School, Gurgaon**
Teacher: Rekha Jha
Joy Badola
Smriti Kalra
Panchuri Aggarwal
Pritish Bhavnani
Ujwal Zutchi

Sakshi Gupta

**Salwan Girls Sr. Sec. School, Rajendra Nagar New Delhi**
Teacher: Sunanda Sharma
Iram Naaz Ansari
Neha Gupta
Neha Gupta
Ritu
Reena
Diksha Singh

**Salwan Public School, Rajendra Nagar New Delhi**
Teacher: Bhawna Puri
Aashna Vishwanathan
Durabhi Rana
Karan Kumar
Maanya Sahni
Padmini Gurgoel
Sohit Miglani

**Sanskriti School, New Delhi**
Teacher: Meenu Arora
Ava Haider
Devaditya Agnihotri
Arjun Pandit
Surbhi Bharadwaj
Abhimanya Kanupella
Tulika Mohan

**Pathways School, Gurgaon**
Teacher: Cathy Anubha Banerji and Shaan Yuden Saini
Abhinav Adlakha
Vidushi
Abhya Adlakha
Grace Laldini
Ishma Dhakal
Nayanika Guha
Pooja Kumar
Sakshi Lakhoti
Vidushi Wahal

**Bluebells School International, New Delhi**
Teacher: Priyanka Malhotra
Deepan Gondday
Atieve Wadhwa
Ushni Dasgupta
Bhavesh Patidar
Harshini Rajesh
Vempali Srividya
Muskan Sethi
Saanjh Shekhar

**T.V.C. Selakui, Dehradun**
Teacher: Migmar Bhuti
Choeyang Tsomo

Tenzin Wangemo
Tenzin Tsomo
Tenzin Sonam
Tenzin Lhakpa
Tenzin Dadul

**Springdales School, New Delhi**
Teacher: Sudatta Bhattacharjee
Vedika Parti
Ishita Dewan
Yamini Malik
Aditi Das
Devangna Maniktala
Ronika Das

**Step-by-Step School, Noida**
Teacher: Meghna Acharya
Malvika Dua
Sakshi Taneja
Pearl Pandya
Akansha Singh
Anahita Dalmia
Khushi Jain

**Vasant Valley School, New Delhi**
Teacher: Shivani Chib
Ishan Kalsia
Ayraan Kumar
Ria Prakash
Ananya Kapur
Ananya Iagoorie
Jansher Debu

Richmond Global School, New Delhi
Teacher: Varinder Arora and Harleen Kaur
Chetali Batra
Alisha Burman
Maneet Kharbanda
Ekansh Mittal
Mehul Singal
Piyush Aggarwal

Bal Bharti School, Rohini
New Delhi
Teacher: Sangeeta Chopra
Anusha Gupta
Meghna Sahni
Shivika Jain
Aakanksha Garg

St. Mary School, New Delhi
Teacher: Vaishali Bhargava
Rhythm Bharti
Devina Thomas
Sarthak Goel
Tanya Jain

Kavita Shiva
Manjula Gaba

G. D. Goenka Public School, New Delhi
Teacher: Harinderjeet Kaur
Rajan Sien Aggarwal
Vikransh Aggarwal
Rupal Paliwal
Saaransh Gupta
Niharika Gupta
Komal Gupta

Mount Abu Public School, New Delhi
Teacher: Nitika Sehgal
Isha Singhla
Samta Jain
Garvit Bajaj
Harshit Tanwar
Aayush Arya
Saurabh Rajput

Happy Days School, Shivpuri
Teacher: Mukesh Rathore
Shashawat Chaudhary
Udhit Joshi
Programme Schedule

Day One: Wednesday, March 18, 2015
9.30 a.m.  Introduction to PeacaJam Philosophy and Objectives of the Conference
10.30 a.m. Ice-breaking Games and Teambuilding Activities
12.45 p.m. Lunch
2.00 p.m.  Session Briefs
5.00 p.m.  Tea

Day Two: Thursday, March 19, 2015
8.00 a.m.  Conference Check-in at Silver Oak Hall at India Habitat Centre, Lodhi Road
9.00 a.m.  Welcome and Opening Ceremony
9.30 a.m.  Introduction to One Billion Acts of Peace Issues
10.15 a.m. Teambuilding Activities
11.15 a.m. Tea Break
12.45 p.m. Workshops
1.15 p.m.  Lunch
2.15 p.m.  Service Projects Begin
4.15 p.m.  Service Projects End
4.15 p.m.  Family Group Session
5.00 p.m.  Closing for Day One and Return Home

Day Three: Friday, March 20, 2015
8.00 a.m.  Report at Venue
9.30 a.m.  HH The Dalai Lama Speaks
10.15 a.m. Question and Answer session.
10.45 a.m. Youth present their projects to His Holiness