

WISCOMP

u | p | d | a | t | e



Foundation for Universal Responsibility of HH The Dalai Lama

Vol. 9 No. 1
December 2008

The desire to see stronger youth engagement as volunteers and decision-makers has gained momentum across the world, concurrent with the growing realization that failure to engage with the youth constructively can lead to an enormous loss of creative and vibrant energy.

We at WISCOMP believe that if actively engaged, youth can serve as catalysts for change. WISCOMP seeks to provide a common platform to the youth whereby they can respect /appreciate differences and work towards a common purpose. By providing access to skills and training, it further seeks to **empower the youth** with the motivation and tools to build a culture of peace in their families, communities, nations and the South Asian region as a whole. This edition of *Update* provides an overview of WISCOMP's efforts towards exploring the possibilities for **youth in peace-building**.

WISCOMP through its various workshops engaged the youth on issues of peacebuilding and conflict transformation. While a three-day intensive training on conflict transformation was organized for youth leaders representing the diverse cultures in Dharamsala; a two-day peacebuilding workshop was conducted for Political Science students at Loreto College, Kolkata. In the month of April, a roundtable discussion was organized with Indian and Afghan students to explore the possibilities for collaboration between the youth of the two countries in the area of peacebuilding.

WISCOMP's initiative on Education for Peace further acted as a propelling force

in this direction. In keeping with its principle that the youth should be familiarized with the values of peace-building & conflict transformation, WISCOMP organized a workshop on Active Listening for students at The Shri Ram School, Gurgaon, and later collaborated with Nehru Memorial Museum and Library for a five-day workshop for school students, where participants were engaged in both theoretical and practical sessions – with an emphasis on experiential learning. An interactive theatre workshop highlighting the significance of theatre as a tool for social change was organized in collaboration with the Natrang Theatre group from Jammu at Bijbehara in the Anantnag district of Jammu and Kashmir.

We believe that educators play a key role in igniting young minds, and therefore it is essential to work with educators alongside the youth. A flagship initiative of WISCOMP's Education for Peace Program, the workshop on *Education for Peace and Multiculturalism* brought together educators from across India for a dialogue on approaches to enable them to empower children and youth to develop an understanding of the differences that may exist in experience, ethnicity, religion and political belief.

Taking its commitment to work with educators and educational institutions forward WISCOMP collaborated with the Springdales Society for a three day seminar-cum-workshop for educators in July, titled *Merging Boundaries and Shifting Paradigms in Education*.

In its other significant endeavors, WISCOMP brought together scholars and practitioners from different parts of the world for an International Symposium, in March 2008, titled *Dialogic Explorations: Texts and Contexts* to reflect upon the possibilities and limits of dialogue as an integral element of democratic practice.

In Jammu and Kashmir, we further strengthened our initiative by organizing workshops along the themes of *Gender, Violence and Human Rights*. A follow up meeting was convened for the Working Group on Politics, Law and Governance to brainstorm on the recommendations made at the group convention held in August 2006. WISCOMP also set up the *Thundal Samanbal* in Ladakh under the auspices of its Women Building Peace Project in Jammu and Kashmir.

In this edition of *Update* we share with you the proceedings and outcomes of some of these events along with the reviews and abstracts of our most recent publications.

The WISCOMP Team

As this issue of *Update* went to press, the Mumbai terror attack shook the country. We condemn such heinous acts of violence. Such acts impel us to introspect and further strengthen our commitment to peacebuilding.

WISCOMP (Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace) is an initiative of the Foundation for Universal Responsibility of His Holiness The Dalai Lama, New Delhi. The Foundation brings together people of different faiths, creeds, professions and nationalities in a manner that respects and encourages diversity of beliefs and practices and promotes and devises strategies to transform this commitment into an instrument of social change. It works to develop nonviolent methods, improve communication between religion and science, and secure human rights and democratic freedom.

Dialogic Explorations: Texts and Contexts

The three day international symposium from March 15-17, 2008 titled *Dialogic Explorations: Texts and Contexts* was envisaged as integral to the academic enrichment and research component of WISCOMP's programs. It formed part of an attempt to alter the dominant state centered discourse on conflict and peacemaking by grounding it within a more holistic and inclusive framework of human security.

The symposium brought together some sixty scholars, practitioners from different parts of the world along with WISCOMP Scholar of Peace fellows, **to reflect upon the possibilities and limits of dialogue as an integral element of democratic practice.** The symposium, engaged with the spaces for dialogue in the context of ethnic political conflict and more broadly as an approach to augment practices of coexistence in multicultural societies. There was an attempt to examine why and to what extent dialogue is increasingly being replaced in the public and civic space by stridency, discord and sectarianism. With conventional practices of consensus building increasingly under strain, the limits and possibilities of dialogue as a philosophy, methodology, process, strategy, and/or tool were explored.

The symposium focused on the lessons to be learnt from successful or thwarted dialogue processes from across the world. The attempt was to squarely locate it within the possibilities of the democratic and participatory framework and explore how policy and practice can be optimally impacted by according priority and public legitimacy to dialogue processes. This was considered relevant both for conflict transformation and peacebuilding and, more importantly, conflict prevention



Hillel Livine, Mari Fitzduff, David Bloomfield, Vasu Gounden at a session on *Dialogue Processes: Global Perspectives*.



Aruna Roy (Social & Political Activist) speaking at the symposium.

in the South Asian region that is increasingly perceived as conflict prone.

In particular the symposium:

- Explored the implications and multiple connotations of the term “dialogue” and appreciated its interdisciplinary lineage, its resonances in literature and the arts, in social and political thought and psychology, in historical construction and critical pedagogy;
- Located dialogue as an integral part of democratic functioning and examined in this connection the creation of a culture of dialogue to complement the purely instrumental and procedural aspects of democratic deliberation;
- Examined the different types of dialogic interventions that have been effective in bringing multiple stakeholders to the table during times of direct violence and in the midst of ethno political conflict;
- Shared experiences of various dialogue practitioners from across the world and evaluated how best dialogue practices and dialogue traditions from different contexts could enrich the content of dialogue theory; and,
- Evaluated the limitations of dialogue by examining contexts where it has not worked so that there is a critical engagement with both dialogic possibilities and boundaries.

International participants included Harold Saunders (USA), Mari Fitzduff, (Ireland), Vasu Gounden (South Africa), Javed Jabber (Pakistan), Fatema Yousuf (Bangladesh), Mohammad Osman (Kenya), David Malone (Canada) and Visaka

Contd. on page 3

Bolstering Public Peace Processes in Jammu and Kashmir

The working group on Politics, Law and Governance met in Jammu on January 4, 2008 to brainstorm on the recommendations made by the group at the Convention on Jammu and Kashmir held in August 2006 and how they could be operationalized. Participants endorsed WISCOMP's stand to work towards strengthening public peace processes. It was also noted that there was a dire need to replace the **culture of impunity** that had set in as far as human rights violations were concerned, whether by state or non state actors, with a **culture of accountability**.

The larger group was subdivided around four thematic clusters – those dealing with recommendations pertaining to confidence building measures across the line of control; human rights violations, political violence; governance, laws and their intersection with gender issues; re-imagining the *samanbal* space so that it can emerge as a centre for legal awareness and leadership. The sub groups made the following recommendations

- Convene citizen body meetings across the Line of Control (LoC);
- Organize border games to increase people to people contact and confidence building measures (CBMs) among people living on both sides of the LoC;
- Initiate comprehensive law reforms, including personal law reforms;
- Organize *Jansunwais* (public hearings);



- Facilitate better collaboration between different NGOs working across the state;
- Work towards the complete rehabilitation of all without distinction-widows and half widows;
- Utilize the *Samanbal* space, for grievance redressal and awareness programs;
- Create *Samanbals* in other parts of the state including the Ladakh region, and make them need-based and area specific.

The group deliberated on how some of the suggested steps could be converted into concrete time based projects over the next few months. A proposal to generate a cross border news portal and initiate a research project on the impact of special laws in the state were among the ideas that received much attention.

Dialogic Explorations: Texts and Contexts

Contd. from page 2

Dharmadasa (Sri Lanka). **Indian participants** included Aruna Roy, Ranabir Samaddar, Shrivatsa Goswami, and Pratap Bhanu Mehta and several others.

Two special performances were conceptualized around the theme of dialogue that followed the formal sessions of the symposium. The first was a performance by Hector Aristizabal, a Columbian now living in California who based his one man show *Nightwind* on a true story of personal imprisonment and torture. The dialogical encounters with the self that enabled a transition from diabolical immutable hatreds and feelings of revenge to the creation of a positive energy that enables transformative change and allows for difficult conversations formed the

leitmotif of this performance. The solo performance used image theatre and dynamic meditation to reach out to the audience.

This was followed by another presentation, by puppeteer Anurupa Roy who used the medium of puppetry to explore notions of dialogue as powerful conversations that can change the way we feel, live and act. The focus was on interactive communication and the interplay of words and silences to open new spaces for dialogue.



Hector Aristizabal performs on dialogue using a technique of the Theatre of the Oppressed.

Gender, Violence and Human Rights

Over the last few years WISCOMP has organized a series of workshops on understanding forms of violence against women within an overall framework of human rights to help create a dialogue around culture, violence and vulnerability in a manner that foregrounds agency and equips participants with problem solving and negotiation skills. The most recent in the series on Gender, Violence and Human Rights were organized with the *samanbal* workers from Budgam and Pulwama, on May 17 and 18, 2008 in Srinagar and a select group from the teachers' training college in Srinagar on May 19 and 20, 2008.

The *samanbal* members at the first workshop were health workers from two districts of Budgam and Pulwama. The familiarity and experience of this group in working on issues of health including mental health enabled them to internalize notions of gender, the difference between sex and gender and comprehend the different forms of gendered violence with relative ease. They were able to relate this to the various cases they had encountered and seen on the door-to-door campaigns that form part of their routine work in their own villages. An important dimension that was included in the workshop was a session on the *Domestic Violence law* passed by the Parliament but which is not applicable to Jammu and Kashmir due to Article 370. The participants discussed whether this was a progressive legislation and whether they would like to see a similar legislation in their own state.

The second workshop was conducted with a group of 24 teachers, some fairly senior in-service teachers as well as younger new entrants from B.Ed college, Srinagar. In addition to extensive



WISCOMP team with the participants and health workers from Budgam and Pulwama at the Workshop.

discussions and activities (like role plays and image theatre) around gender and domestic violence, an interesting exercise done with this group of teacher-students was a discussion on issues of human security which involved an exercise in self-ranking on topics related to human security vis a vis worldwide standards. This exercise facilitated a sober appraisal of the fact that despite being low on the democracy and freedom index (in their perception) the participants were far higher on the other human needs index in comparison with statistics drawn from across the world. As workshop facilitator Sunita Menon pointed out, "It was very interesting that for all the participants the first response after disbelief was that of elation- that they were among the top 10% of world population who has all these basic rights." The participants also engaged in a discussion around democracy and peoples rights in Kashmir and why there was such a disparity when it came to access to rights.

Athwaas Consultation

The WISCOMP *Athwaas* Consultative Meeting was convened on November 1, 2008 in New Delhi to review the work done by *Athwaas* in the last seven years as well as to delineate its role in the future. Certain pertinent questions on self reflection initiated the discussions through the day.

Some of the questions raised at the meeting were:

- What role could *Athwaas* play in order to cut through the cycle of retribution and work towards countering / condemning all acts of hate speech?
- How can *Athwaas* work towards increasing sensitivity towards the 'other' community?
- Where does *Athwaas* stand on this?

In the last seven years *Athwaas* had been able to forge bonds among diverse groups and also register its presence as

an effective voice in civil society. However given the failure to institutionalize dialogue, the impact of *Athwaas* has been limited especially with regard to promoting dialogue. Members at the meeting reiterated the need for inclusion of the younger generation into the *Athwaas* program. Another major concern raised was to counter hate speech. It was decided at the meeting that there was a need to review and reassess the role and purpose of *Athwaas*.



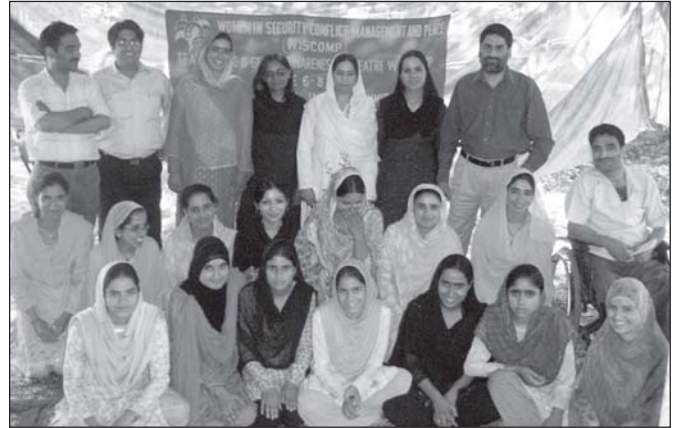
Athwaas members Nirojini Bhat, Hameedah Nayeem & Neerja Matoo at the meeting.

Theatre for Social Change

Seeking to explore and demonstrate the potential of theatre as a powerful tool for social change, a theatre workshop was organized by WISCOMP from June 6-8, 2008 at Bijabehera, in the Anantnag district of Jammu and Kashmir. It brought together a group of twenty high school and junior college students from the Bijbehara samanbal, for a three day interaction with members of the well-known theatre group from Jammu, *Natrang* – Balwant Thakur and Anil Tickoo.

Breaking the myths associated with the term theatre, the workshop engaged the participants in a number of exercises to demonstrate how theatre could be employed as an invisible tool to generate conversations on different social issues, highlighting thereby the employment of **theatre for social change**. Exhibiting that theatre was **more than a sum total of songs, dances, mimicry and props**, the workshop entailed experimenting with certain techniques of dramatic projection and the use of movement, space and voice to convey messages. The methodologies of communication - both verbal and more importantly non-verbal, were also discussed and demonstrated.

Responding to the question what they were taking back from the workshop, most of the participants said self confidence, not



Participants with the Resource persons & WISCOMP team.

feeling shy to ask questions to their teachers and parents, a sense of group bonding and desire to plan activities collectively, and finally a new understanding about the meaning and potential of theatre for change. At the end of the workshop, the participants concurred that theatre was now a '**weapon**' in their hands qualitatively different from the gun, but a weapon nevertheless that could generate new thinking and perhaps even social change.

Expanding Constituencies of Peace

WISCOMP staff visited Ladakh on June 30–July 1, 2008 to discuss and set up a samanbal center in this region as part of its attempt to bring voices from Ladakh and Jammu into the discourse and activities under the auspices of Women Building Peace project in Jammu and Kashmir. The first part of the project had planned a pro active engagement with voices



Members of Thundal Samanbal with WISCOMP team.

from Kashmir valley as this was the epicenter of the conflict and the new phase now envisions an engagement with other parts of the state – namely Jammu and Ladakh to further the aim of inclusivity.

The samanbal was set up at Chochut, a village on the outskirts of Leh with a group of Buddhist and Muslim women. The group of women at Chochut exemplify the notion of a *Samanbal* as a space in the public domain wherein they had a sense of collective ownership. The members cutting across communities' reflected the core idea of the *Samanbals* approach towards community building, autonomy and self reliance.

It was decided after consultation with the group members that Ladakh Samanbal will be called 'Thundal (which means a handshake in Ladakhi.) *Samanbal*'. It was also agreed that besides economic activities like knitting, sewing and even jam-juice making (during the season when Seabuckthorn is harvested), issues related to women's health, nutrition and social and political rights will be addressed by holding health and nutrition camps and workshops on capacity building and rights.

Searching for Peace in Afghanistan: Collaborative Possibilities for Youth in Peacebuilding

Students, government representatives and practitioners of conflict transformation and peacebuilding were brought together by WISCOMP for a roundtable discussion titled *Searching for Peace in Afghanistan: Collaborative Possibilities for Youth in Peacebuilding*, on April 27, 2008 in New Delhi.

The roundtable was conceptualized as an important first step for WISCOMP to comprehend the complex ground realities in contemporary Afghanistan and the multiple actors engaged in what is characterized broadly as the peacebuilding processes. It was envisioned as a space to:

- Comprehend the current realities in Afghanistan through the lens of human security;
- Build and bring the voices of youth from Afghanistan to impact the broader discourse on Indo-Afghan relations;
- Explore possibilities for collaboration between the youth of India and the young people from Afghanistan; and
- Identify ways in which voices of the youth could impact the processes of peacebuilding.

Among many others, the participants included Abdul Ghafoor Liwal, (Director Regional Studies Centre of Afghanistan); Former Ambassador I.P. Khosla, T.C.A Raghavan (Joint Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India), Abas Basir (First Secretary, Embassy of Afghanistan in New Delhi), Philipp Ackermann (Minister Counsellor, German Embassy in New Delhi), Radha Kumar (Director, Nelson Mandela Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution at Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi) and A.K. Rashid (Visiting Professor at the Centre of Persian and Central Asian Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi).

The opening session of the roundtable, *Perspectives from Afghanistan*, was structured to highlight the current challenges and opportunities in peacebuilding for Afghan youth in the



(L to R) Philipp Ackermann (Minister Counselor, Embassy of German Democratic Republic in New Delhi); Amb. I.P. Khosla; TCA Raghavan (Jt. Secy, GoI); Hamdia Hamdard, (Afghan student at JMI).

country; the peacebuilding processes that the youth have engaged in after the fall of the Taliban regime and some opportunities that could be explored to strengthen ties between youth from India and Afghanistan.

The subsequent sessions focused on several related themes – the regional and the international efforts especially India's role in the reconstruction of Afghanistan, causes of the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan and the problems it posed for reconstruction and peacebuilding and the ways in which the youth could impact these processes both within Afghanistan and outside, through countries engaged in the ongoing processes of reconstruction.

The concluding session engaged the multi level actors in a vibrant discussion on the broader themes of reconstruction and peacebuilding and elicited varied responses around themes of democracy, stabilizing the economy, ensuring advancement in education, rebuilding fractured relationships, and ascertaining the role of youth in these processes.

It is WISCOMP's hope that the process started at the Roundtable would lead to sustained collaboration between the youth of the two countries.



Building Common Ground: Afghan and Indian Youth

At the roundtable discussion, organized by WISCOMP in April, the need to explore as well as exploit the potential for collaboration between Afghan youth and Indian youth in the area of peacebuilding was widely endorsed. The Afghanistan Preparatory Committee Meeting was convened by WISCOMP on August 20, 2008 with the intent to draw out a plan of action to carry forth WISCOMP's engagement in the area. Some of the guiding questions - that steered the deliberations at this meeting were:

- How can the youth impact and intervene in the ongoing processes of democratization, building the economy, ensuring advancement in education, and rebuilding fractured relationships in Afghanistan?
- What are the possibilities for collaboration between the youth of India and the young people from Afghanistan? What are the specific areas in which the youth of the two countries can collaborate?
- What role can the media play in peacebuilding?
- How has the prolonged conflict affected the physical and mental well-being of the youth in Afghanistan? How can the youth play a more active role in trauma healing and counseling?
- Which actors, given their location and skills/expertise in a given setting can be brought together to initiate and sustain constructive change processes?
- What steps can be taken to promote intergenerational dialogue on political matters?
- How can WISCOMP facilitate such interactions?

Participants were organized into three groups-*Educational and Cultural Initiatives for Peace Psycho-Social healing, Democracy, Diversity and Difference* to deliberate on the possibilities for collaboration between the youth from the two countries and the ways in which they could impact the peacebuilding processes both within and outside Afghanistan.

Some of the recommendations which emerged as a result of the deliberations were:

Group on Educational and Cultural Initiatives for Peace

1. Organize Teacher Training workshops.
2. Commence initiatives akin to the *Shiksha Mitra* program and promote the usage of Arts, Crafts and Story telling in Schools.
3. Prepare an educational Kit/ Booklet to provide information about the Indian Education System and the different programs offered at Universities.



Indian & Afghan students during the discussion.

4. Organize Orientation course for Afghan Students admitted to Indian universities in various program.
5. Launch a web blog.
6. Promote civil society interaction especially transnational youth interaction through exchange programs and the like.
7. Train the youth for active citizenship including the use of folk culture and street plays etc.
8. Organize workshops/ discussions around the role of the media.
9. Sensitize the Indian Students.
10. Promote collaboration between Students' unions.

Group on Psycho-Social healing

1. Work with Afghan youth to breaking biases.
2. Provide infrastructure for dialogues to take place.
3. Encourage youth to recognize alternative realities and generate options.
4. Promote the usage of music and documentaries.
5. Form support groups.

Group on Democracy, Diversity and Differenc

1. Work with existing Afghan youth organizations for capacity building and establish links with provincial youth organizations.
2. Initiate discussions between youth from Afghanistan and India.
3. Work with /through the Afghan government, with a special focus on the police and the army.

Some of the recommendations made by the WISCOMP team

1. Bring together Afghan students from different parts of India.
2. Facilitate interaction between Afghan students and Indian Students in Delhi.
3. Network with youth organizations in Afghanistan.

Indo-Afghan Youth Forum

As a part of its Indo-Afghan Youth Forum, WISCOMP screened *Afghan Chronicles* at the India International Center on October 30, 2008. *Afghan Chronicles* is a fifty minute documentary written and directed by Dominic Morissette. The screening was attended by over fifty people including Afghan and Indian students.

Using the example of a press group – *Killid Media* that comprised of two magazines the *Killid* and *Mursal*, and a radio station, the film chronicled the nascent democratic processes as well as the related social conditions in war-torn Afghanistan, post 2004.

In post-war Afghanistan, the media had carved out a space of relative freedom for itself which it used to encourage democracy, modernization, education and social awareness among the people. *Mursal* a woman's magazine, focused on issues such as hygiene, medical health, reproduction, among



Sanna Selin (First Secretary, Embassy of Finland in New Delhi); Philipp Ackermann (Minister Counselor, Embassy of Germany in New Delhi); A.K. Rashid (Cultural Counselor, Embassy of Afghanistan in New Delh).

others. The medium of print journalism took these themes to the grass-roots of Kabul thereby creating a new level of awareness amongst Afghan women, who otherwise had few avenues to voice their concerns. The film also focused on the trials and tribulations of women journalists in a society undergoing transition.

The screening of the film was followed by an hour long discussion on its themes. This discussion was facilitated by Philipp Ackermann, Minister Counselor, Embassy of German Democratic Republic in New Delhi. Many of the Afghan students expressed that the film was a realistic representation of Kabul in current times.

The other themes that emerged during the discussion were that the onset of democracy had to be a step-by-step process in Afghanistan. Education through media was also critical to rebuilding the society and fabric of the nation. Some participants suggested that when political situations permit, the media should use its freedom to bolster positive social change based on the indigenous culture in order to have a wide-ranging and integrative effect.

According to many Afghan students, the media was perhaps moving too fast in its projections of modernization through democracy. The people were unable to keep up with this, and as a result they were rejecting change. Some others asserted that change in Afghanistan could not be a purely western notion. It had to come from the history and traditions of the country as well. The West needed to have a clear approach towards reconstruction in Afghanistan, and ensure that past mistakes were not repeated. The thrust of the west's intervention had to be humanitarian aid and assistance so as to enable a populace ravaged by decades of conflict to embolden their visions of democracy in Afghanistan.

Peace Prints

WISCOMP invites articles for *Peace Prints- A South Asian Journal of Peacebuilding*. Peace Prints provides space for research on issues that lie at the intersection of gender, conflict, peace and security and serves as a resource for practitioners and scholars working in the field of peacebuilding in the South Asian region. For details about manuscript submissions, please visit www.wiscomp.org / peaceprints.htm

Conflict Transformation Workshop for Indian and Tibetan Youth Leaders, Dharamsala

A key goal of WISCOMP is to initiate ‘inter-cultural’ Conflict Transformation Workshops for youth leaders from diverse cultures. Using this methodology, the WISCOMP team collaborated with the Tibetan Center for Conflict Resolution to conduct a three-day intensive training for young women and men from Tibet and India, from November 25-27, 2007. The training was organized for 30 youth leaders in Dharamsala to:

- Strengthen the historical relationship between Indians and Tibetans;
- Enable the participants to become “role models” for nonviolence and compassion in their communities;
- Facilitate coexistence between the Indian and Tibetan communities and celebrate their diverse traditions.

Each participant was carefully selected in order to build strategic relationships between youth leaders living in the state of

Himachal Pradesh. The purpose was also to empower them with skills in active nonviolence to deal with intercommunity conflicts in the state.



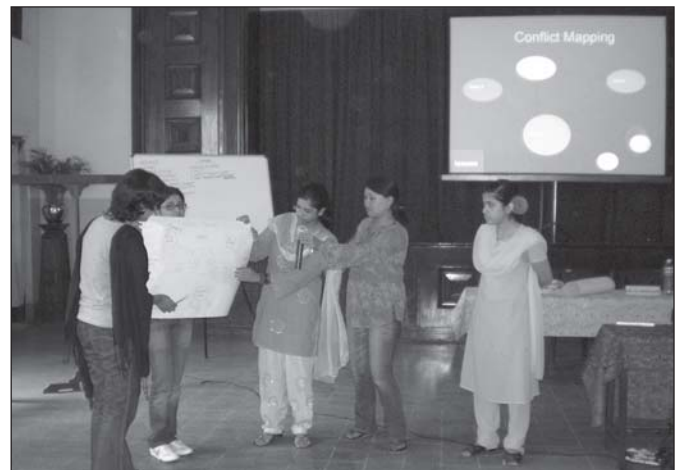
WISCOMP staff facilitates the training with the Tibetan Center for Conflict Resolution, Dharamsala.

Youth and Peacebuilding

The WISCOMP team conducted a two-day Peacebuilding Workshop for Political Science students from December 7-8, 2007 at Loreto College, Kolkata. A first of its kind at Loreto, the Workshop sought to introduce the students to the field of peacebuilding, with a special emphasis on Conflict Prevention and Conflict Transformation – Frameworks. To maximize learning, the WISCOMP team employed multiple teaching formats such as lecture, group discussion, role plays, debriefing, films and audio-visual presentations. A central theme at the Workshop was the role of women in peacebuilding, drawing on lessons from WISCOMP’s *Athwaas* initiative.



Meenakshi Gopinath (Hon. Director, WISCOMP) conducts the session on peacebuilding.



Participants make a presentation.

Following an introduction to the theoretical concepts and the tool of “conflict mapping”, participants were invited to develop their own strategies for building peace in regions of conflict such as Sri Lanka, Manipur, Iraq and Kashmir. The Workshop concluded with an invitation from the College Principal, Sister Tina, to conduct similar trainings for students from other disciplines as well. WISCOMP plans to follow up on this invitation to build youth-led “constituencies for peace” in different parts of the country.

Engendering a Culture of Peace through Education

WISCOMP recognizes the pressing need to introduce Education for Peace in the curricula of schools and colleges for cultivating a culture of peace and coexistence in our society. As a flagship initiative of WISCOMP, the national workshop on **Education for Peace and Multiculturalism** was held on April 12–13, 2008 in New Delhi. It brought together educators from Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Jammu and Kashmir, Manipur, Maharashtra, and the National Capital Region for a dialogue on approaches that could be incorporated, both within and outside the classroom to empower children and youth to:

- Develop an understanding of, and accommodation for, the differences that may exist in experience, ethnicity, religion, and political beliefs;
- Transform prejudices and build trust and relationships across myriad faultlines (religion, race, nationality, gender, class, ethnicity, to name a few);
- Develop skills in dialogue, active listening and other forms of nonviolent communication; and,
- Promote coexistence and multiculturalism in their communities and society.

The WISCOMP Education for Peace Program foregrounds experiential learning and the use of multiple formats such as cross-community and cross-cultural dialogues, workshops, film, theater, dance, music, role-plays, simulations and group discussions.

The workshop opened with a panel discussion on *Education for Peace* which included a discussion on the historical trajectory and the relevance of Education for Peace in the contemporary context where violence has penetrated school campuses. The discussion further proceeded to look at the challenges of integrating gender/ peace in the school curriculum in India



Kevin Kester (extreme right), conducts the interactive workshop on dialogue & non-violent communication.



Feruzan Mehta, Shweta Singh, Poonam Batra, Ameeta Wattal, Abha Adams at the panel discussion on *Education for Peace*.

and the importance of building home-school partnerships for the realization of the goals of Education for Peace.

Further deliberations at the workshop revolved around various themes including:

- What are the challenges of developing a multicultural syllabus for school students in different regions of India?
- What can teachers do to help students understand and investigate the implicit cultural assumptions and frames of reference of the subject they teach?
- Is there a “school culture” or “structure” that promotes grouping and labeling?
- In what ways can teachers re-conceptualize their role to be educators for multiculturalism? What characteristics would a multicultural educator possess?

One of the panel discussions *Doing Education for Peace: Perspectives from the Field* highlighted the work of practitioners

Contd. on page 12



H. Ghanashyam Singh (Principal, Modern Higher Secondary School, Bishnupur, Manipur) makes an intervention.

Experiencing, Exploring, Expanding Selves

In keeping with WISCOMP's belief that the youth should be familiarized with the values of peacebuilding & conflict transformation, WISCOMP collaborated with Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (NMML), New Delhi for a five day workshop for high school students. Titled *Experiencing, Exploring, Expanding Selves: Identity, Conflict and Coexistence*, the workshop was designed to empower the young with motivation & skills to build a culture of peace in their families, communities, nation and the South Asian region. The workshop was held from June 24-28, 2008 in New Delhi and about thirty five students from different parts of the city participated.

The aims of the workshop were:

- Elucidate notions of identity, conflict and coexistence.
- Identify the different mediums like historical narratives, films, family lore etc through which identities, prejudices, stereotypes are constructed and perpetuated.
- Impart skills and capacities to manage conflicts emanating from such processes of identity construction and create a culture of coexistence.

The workshop provided a context for participants to learn about individuals, groups and communities different from their own and engaged the participants in both theoretical and practical sessions – with an emphasis on experiential learning. Encouraging participants to be proactive towards building a culture of peace, in his introductory address L.C Jain, a veteran freedom fighter shared inspiring stories of three exemplary individuals from the pre independence days. He encouraged the young participants to take an active part in bringing about positive change within them, become active citizens and inspire others to do the same for their community.

The session on *Understanding Identity, Conflict and Conflict Transformation* explored diverse theoretical perspectives on identity, conflict and coexistence. It encouraged participants to reflect on the relationship between identity and conflict through discussions on the varied processes of identity construction and formation and perpetuation of prejudices and stereotypes about the 'other'.

To further the participants' understanding of these processes, sessions on *Constructing Identity – Deconstructing History*, *Construction of Identities through Cartoons & Comic Strips* and *Inter Community Relations through the Lens of Bollywood* explored films and textbooks as mediums of identity construction.



(L to R): Meenakshi Gopinath, (Hon. Director WISCOMP),
L.C. Jain (Freedom Fighter),
Mridula Mukherjee (Director, NMML).

This enabled the participants to investigate how each of us harbors certain notions and mindsets. It also implored the participants to recognize the ways in which the baggage of fears and prejudice is passed on from one generation to the next through family lore.

The session on *Construction of Identities through Cartoons and Comic Strips* involved participants in various creative activities and introduced the idea of social cartooning as a powerful medium to question, investigate and challenge certain personal, social and cultural assumptions of the 'other'.

Walks through the different sections of the Nehru Memorial Museum & Library such as the archives, oral history section, photographs and micro films sections enabled the participants to 'witness' certain 'historical' processes of identity construction.

To develop and hone practical skills and capacities necessary to transform relationships that had the potential to lead to violent conflicts, subsequent sessions introduced the methodologies of *Nonviolent Communication*, the technique of *Active listening*, *Dialogue* and *Theatre of the Oppressed*.

The session on *Waging Conflict Non Violently* by using documentary- features on the lives of Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr. focused discussion around the question of 'conflict' – whether it needs to be eliminated or its energy channeled towards constructive social change.

In addition, participants enthusiastically attended some other experiential activities including *Nature Walk* to Teen Murti grounds and a *Star Watch* at the Planetarium whereby they were encouraged to explore the interconnections that can be witnessed in nature and amongst the celestial bodies.

At the conclusion of the workshop, students suggested that the future workshops be of longer duration. NMML also invited WISCOMP to conduct workshops for students collaboratively on a regular basis.



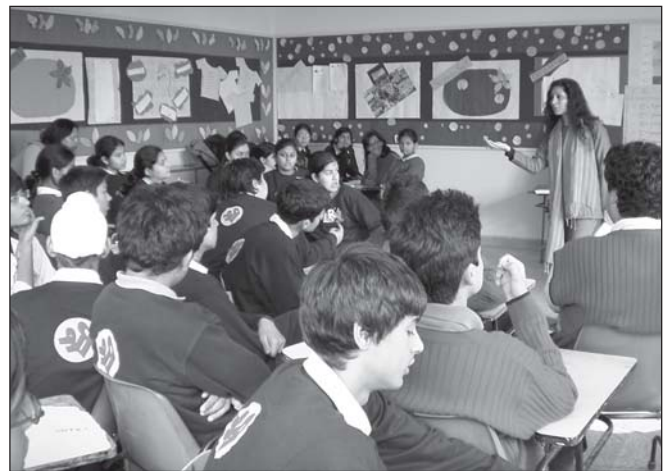
Active Listening – A Workshop

As part of its efforts to initiate a discourse on “education for a culture of peace” in schools and colleges across the country, WISCOMP organized a workshop on Active Listening at The Shri Ram School, DLF, Gurgaon on December 12, 2007. With a special emphasis on active listening as a tool to deal with conflicts in the classroom, a series of mini-workshops were conducted with a focus group of twenty 11th grade students.

Beginning with an introduction to the technique of active listening and its relevance in the context of growing violence on school and college campuses, the workshop resource person, Meenakshi Chhabra (Faculty member, Intercultural Relations Program at Lesley University, Cambridge) provided a context for participants to explore tools of active listening, role-plays and engaged in group discussions to debrief on the lessons learned.

At the conclusion of the Workshop, Shri Ram School invited WISCOMP to conduct trainings for its teachers on “active

listening and dialogue” so that the module can be more fully integrated into classroom teaching.



Meenakshi Chhabra conducting the session at The Shri Ram School.

Engendering a Culture of Peace through Education

Contd. from page 10

who have designed and operationalized Education for Peace initiatives in their communities. It included case studies from three different contexts: *Perspectives from Manipur – CFPEM Initiatives*; *Transforming Enemy Images in Gujarat – The Samerth Initiative*; and *Building Local Capacities for Peace: The City Montessori School Experience*.

While the first two panel discussions of the Workshop explored diverse theoretical perspectives on the themes of multiculturalism and education for peace, the subsequent sessions emphasized on the practical skills and methodologies that educators could apply in their respective contexts with an effort to build a dynamic synergy between the two.

The workshop included several interactive sessions on the *Use of Films in Education for Peace*, *Peace Education Skills: Dialogue and Nonviolent Communication*, *Theater of the Oppressed: A Tool for Educators* and *Heritage Walk* to introduce methodologies that could be employed by the participants in the classroom to implement the tenets of the philosophy of education for peace and multiculturalism.

The participants provided encouraging feedback to WISCOMP and made suggestions for subsequent interactions. Several possibilities for partnerships and follow-up initiatives were also envisioned which have since then led to the planning and organization of workshops in different parts of India and the South Asian region.

Merging Boundaries and Shifting Paradigms in Education

WISCOMP is committed to working with educational institutions to engender a culture of peace through the development of curricula and innovative methodology. Taking another step in this direction, WISCOMP collaborated with the Springdales Society for a three day seminar-cum-workshop from July 3-5, 2008 titled *Merging Boundaries and Shifting Paradigms in Education*. It brought together educators for a dialogue on different approaches that could enable them to address the complexities of 'teaching' in a multicultural context like India. It sought to provide space for discussion on experimenting with diverse methodologies, exploring changing vocabularies of education and stimulating holistic learning. The primary objective of the seminar was capacity building for the educators so that they can enable the new generation to proactively participate in conflict transformation across socio-political divides in a multicultural society.

Referring to the similar objectives, concerns and methods of the peacebuilding community and educators in the opening session of the seminar, Meenakshi Gopinath, (Honorary Director, WISCOMP) expressed hope that the two would work towards making the world safe for difference.

The seminar sessions on “*Multicultural Explorations within and Beyond the classroom*” and “*Shifting Paradigms: Multiple Realities*”, addressed a broad spectrum of questions:

- How can we best understand multiculturalism in the context of a society like India?

- What are the challenges of developing a multicultural syllabus for school students in India?
- What can teachers do to help students understand and investigate the implicit cultural assumptions and frames of reference of the subject they teach?
- How can teachers help reduce prejudice in the classroom?
- Is there a “school culture” or “structure” that promotes grouping and labeling?

In an attempt to respond to the almost exclusive reliance on textbooks as pedagogical tools in India, some of the sessions introduced innovative pedagogical tools that educators could employ within the classroom like theatre, music, puppetry, dance, films and cartoons. The purpose of these sessions was to kindle reflection and encourage teachers to identify the challenges they face as educators in multicultural contexts and suggest some ways to respond to them.

Delivering the valedictory address on, “*Redefining Spaces: Moving Towards a Constructivist Classroom*”, Sudipta Kaviraj, Professor, Columbia University affirmed the need to converge learnings from Western and Indian thought as well as seemingly contradictory traditions within Indian political thought to reinvent solutions for contemporary problems. Collating learnings of the entire seminar, he rendered an eloquent exposition on creating a constructivist classroom to respond to challenges posed by diversity and difference.



Sunita Menon (Program Manager, Education & Training, Breakthrough), conducting a session on Human Rights Education.



Anurupa Roy (Founder, Kat Katha), conducting the puppetry workshop.

Book Review:

Seeking Paths for Justice and Reconciliation in Gujarat*

Harsh Mander's study titled *Towards Healing? Seeking Paths for Justice and Reconciliation in Gujarat* is the result of the engagement of a bureaucrat-turned activist with issues of Justice and Reconciliation in the aftermath of the carnage that swept Gujarat in early 2002. The outcome of a research project facilitated by WISCOMP, it raises fundamental questions about the possibility, and indeed ethicality of processes of dialogue in a situation fraught with fear, violence, suspicion and persecution. The continuing feelings of insecurity of the minorities, and their grievances at what they see as "gross miscarriages of justice", matched by the brazenness and insensitivity of state mechanisms, present formidable challenges for prospects of coexistence.

Because truth, justice and reconciliation mean different things to different people, coexistence is not possible when various conflicting parties humiliate and stifle one another, and, while a properly functional judicial system is crucial to social stability, a sense of justice and fairplay has to be sustained by a social ethos of enlightened public opinion.

Yet, maintaining the fine balance between 'remembering' and forgetting in processes of reconciliation and the search for justice is as scholar Dilip Simeon has exhorted elsewhere, crucial. Reconciliation is neither the perpetual nurturing of grievance nor the cultivation of amnesia. It requires the adoption of non violent processes that enable hostile groups to move from a divided past to a shared future.

At WISCOMP, we are particularly interested in the interface between reconciliation & democracy & the pre-dispositions in the ethos of societies that block or facilitate genuine dialogue. The eventual ramifications of everyday practices of exclusion and segregation in seemingly multicultural contexts is particularly relevant – as are issues of power, patriarchy and the role that education and media actually play in reinforcing stereotypes and tying us to crippling prejudices. More, importantly, *reconciliation* or its most accepted avatars are still in our part of the world, situated largely within a religious idiom.

The challenge is to explore how those resources can be located within secular spaces and protected from being hijacked by fundamentalist ideology – and how, if at all, they can be integrated into formal decision – making processes to offer an alternative paradigm for worlds that are today in collision. Harsh Mander's study on Gujarat is an important resource for us at WISCOMP, in our efforts to refine our understanding of the patterns of conflict in the state and the possible spaces for civil society interventions.

*Excerpts from the Introduction to the book.

Coming from an individual, whose deep commitment to non-violent change, and social justice needs no elaboration here – *Towards Healing? Seeking Paths for Justice and Reconciliation in Gujarat* is a deeply reflective, and yet theoretically challenging treatise which highlights the dilemmas of peace building in a zone where there is, in Mander's words, a "fragile unequal peace – a symbolic peace – a peace without justice – after a systematic pogrom was unleashed where people continue to live with hate and fear, where perpetrators of the most heinous crimes against humanity are accorded impunity by a *democratically re-elected government*."

Harsh Mander's impassioned critique of the role of state, and his sustained work among the victims of the carnage, has yielded an innovative approach which he calls Nyayagraha – a potential mass movement, engendered by the sustained work of the Nyaya Pathiks – or the seekers of justice. A novel articulation like *satyagraha* in its time or *Universal responsibility* today, Nyayagraha is a multilayered concept that integrates philosophy and praxis and that animates a small non-violent peaceforce of young Aman Pathiks to seek spaces for healing in a society torn asunder by conflict.

The book is divided into two sections. While the first by Harsh Mander documents the Nyayagraha experiment, examines its possibilities and assesses its potential to emerge into a movement, the second section is photographer and filmmaker Akanksha Joshi's exploration of photographs and stories from Gujarat. These are profiles of courage and compassion captured through the sensibilities of an artist. Juxtaposing narratives and photographs of women and men who have shown indomitable courage in the face of adversity with those who have shown remarkable compassion and ability to stand up for their convictions, Joshi invites us into a world where images and expressions convey powerful stories that go beyond the written and spoken words. The anguish and pain is visually documented as we turn through the pages of this album. Marking the triumph of the human spirit in the darkest of hours, it both supplements the first textual section and also independently and eloquently, conveys messages through a different medium and a different set of lenses that encourage us to think beyond our safe zones of complacency.

Towards Healing? Seeking Paths for Justice and Reconciliation in Gujarat raises a fundamental question for democratic India. Is reliance on the formal structures of redressal still a defensible or feasible option in the context of the challenges that the Gujarats of India present for today and for tomorrow.

- Harsh Mander, *Towards Healing? Seeking Paths for Justice and Reconciliation in Gujarat*, WISCOMP (2008)
- Anupama Sekhar, comp, *Closer to Ourselves – Stories from the Journey Towards Peace in South Asia*, WISCOMP (2008)
- Navanita Sinha and Qurrat-ul-Ain, *Creating Stories for Children in Jammu and Kashmir, Building Constituencies of Peace: Stakeholders in Dialogue X* (2008)
- Sumona DasGupta and Navanita Sinha, *Cultural Initiatives for Peace and Reconciliation: Alternative Pathways, Building Constituencies of Peace: Stakeholders in Dialogue-XI* (2008)
- Sumona DasGupta and Navanita Sinha, *Gender, Violence and Rights: Exploring Responses from Jammu and Kashmir, Building Constituencies of Peace: Stakeholders in Dialogue XII* (2008)
- Lea Krichenia and Manjrika Sewak, *Gujarat: Creating Spaces for Dialogue, Justice and Reconciliation* (2008)
- Anjana Shakya, *Impact of Armed Conflict on Women and Children in Nepal*, WISCOMP Discussion Paper 17 (2008)
- Siddharth Mallavarapu, *International Relations Theory and Non-Traditional Approaches to Security*, WISCOMP Perspectives 27 (2008)
- Malavika Vartak, *Memory and Migration: Bhutanese Refugee Women and Oral Histories of Self and Nation*, WISCOMP Perspectives 28 (2008)

Breaking Stereotypes through Films

The WISCOMP Conflict Transformation Program seeks to empower the “next generation” of leaders in India and Pakistan to become agents of constructive social change. An important component of this endeavor has been to explore the role of the popular media and the manner in which it can be effectively used as a tool for addressing prejudices and transforming enemy images. Taking this idea to a larger audience, WISCOMP in collaboration with Lady Shri Ram College for Women, organized the screening of *Chitti Hatia (White Shops)* on August 11, 2008. The film addresses widespread negative stereotypes that people from both countries hold about the

‘other’. Highlighting the absence of sustained face-to-face interaction with people from the other country as one of the major reasons for sustained hostility, the film takes the viewers on a journey to show that people across the border are as humane, helpful, hospitable and compassionate as those on this side. The discussion following the screening of the film with the Director Sharad Sharma and the film's protagonist Bittoo Sondhi provided a space to the participants to critically engage with questions of stereotype formation and prejudice reduction among Indians vis a vis Pakistan and its people.

Chitti Hatia (White Shops), the story of Bittoo Sondhi, a Delhi based biker and his triumph over the unknown. Bittoo's father, at the age of thirteen, migrated to India during partition. This 52 minute film explores the streets of Rawalpindi to help Bittoo fulfill his father's long cherished dream of revisiting his birthplace- a wish which could not be realized till his death. Bittoo however, got an opportunity to fulfill his father's dream when his cartoonist friend Sharad Sharma received an invitation to run a comics workshop in Lahore.

Once the workshop was over, both Bittoo and Sharad set out on a mission to search for Bittoo's ancestral house in Rawalpindi. *Chitti Hatia* is not just a search but rather a chronicle which talks about partition and a family that was forced to migrate from Pakistan and in the process helps to break the stereotypical image held in our minds about the people of Pakistan.

Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace
FOUNDATION FOR UNIVERSAL RESPONSIBILITY OF HH THE DALAI LAMA

**FUR
TRUSTEES**

H.H. The Dalai Lama
Chairman, Board of Trustees

Prof. S. Rinpoche
Kalon Tripa

Chhime R. Chhoekyapa

Tendzin Choegyal

Rajiv Mehrotra
Trustee/Secretary

**WISCOMP
ADVISORY BOARD**

Isher Judge Ahluwalia
 Kiran Bedi
 I P Khosla
 Satish Kumar
 Surjit Mansingh
 Dalip Mehta
 Mrinal Pande
 Vibha Parthasarathi
 Aruna Roy
 Leila Seth
 Vandana Shiva
 B G Verghese

**WISCOMP
CONSULTATIVE
COMMITTEE**

Kanti Bajpai
 Kamla Bhasin
 Urvashi Butalia
 Anuradha Chenoy
 Shekhar Gupta
 Malavika Karlekar
 Ritu Menon
 Poonam Mutreja
 Deepa Ollapally
 C Raja Mohan
 Varun Sahni

WISCOMP UPDATE is the newsletter of *Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace*. WISCOMP is an initiative of the Foundation for Universal Responsibility of His Holiness The Dalai Lama, New Delhi. We see our role as creating the space to 'engender' an inclusive, conceptual vocabulary on issues of peace and security. WISCOMP works to facilitate the participation and leadership of women in conflict resolution and peacebuilding, and to leverage support for this at the national, regional and international levels.

FUR – WISCOMP TEAM

Rajiv Mehrotra (Secretary, FUR)
 Raji Ramanan (Project Officer, FUR)
 Thupten Tsewang (Program Manager, FUR)
 Harish C. Bhatt (Accounts and Admn. Officer)
 Kunchok Dolma (Program Assistant, FUR)
 Devender Kumar (Office Assistant)

Meenakshi Gopinath (Hon. Director, WISCOMP)
 Sumona DasGupta (Assistant Director, WISCOMP)
 Manjrika Sewak (Senior Program Officer, WISCOMP)
 Seema Kakran (Program Officer, WISCOMP)
 Navanita Sinha (Program Associate, WISCOMP)
 Ashima Kaul (Consultant, WISCOMP)
 Priyanka Singh (Consultant, WISCOMP)
 Amritha Venkatraman (Consultant, WISCOMP)
 Swapna K. Nayudu (Consultant, WISCOMP)
 Sree Kumari V. (Office Assistant, WISCOMP)

Congratulations

Congratulations to Dr. Meenakshi Gopinath, Honorary Director, WISCOMP on receiving **Celebrating Womanhood South Asian Region Recognition** award presented to her "for her courage, efforts and commitment in the sector of Social Harmony".

This award is instituted by SAP International and Creative Statements, Nepal.

Congratulations to the *Athwaas* members upon the selection of *Athwaas* as one of the peacebuilding approaches for the Global Peacebuilders Catalogue.

Global Peacebuilders is an international network of conflict resolution, conflict transformation and peacebuilding initiatives that has been connecting organizations, researchers, academics and individual practitioners.

In late 2007 it made an open call to individuals and organizations involved in creating the conditions for sustainable peace in their communities to share their *approaches* to peacebuilding. The purpose was to create a publication that might offer peacebuilders working in areas of conflict across the world an opportunity to learn and inform their own work, building up their international networks along the way. A selection panel of experienced peacebuilders working in Northern Ireland evaluated and selected 18 of these approaches for publication in the Peacebuilding Approaches Catalogue. *Athwaas* was one of these 18 approaches.

WISCOMP

Foundation for Universal Responsibility of HH The Dalai Lama
 Core 4A, Upper Ground Floor, India Habitat Center, Lodhi Road, New Delhi-110003, India
 Tel: 91-11-24648450 • Telefax: 91-11-24648451
 Email: wiscomp2006@gmail.com • Website: www.wiscomp.org

For Private Circulation only.