

Local Change Makers Course On Freedom of Religion and Belief

10th May 2022 to 13th May 2022

Held at: Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar College of Social Work, Morane, Dhule

About the Course

The Local Changemakers Course is based on a module prepared by Katherine Cash of Stefan us Alliance International, with the help of a reference group from all continents. The Module consists of nine sessions. While the first five sessions focus on understanding and mapping forb and its violations including the sites of violations. The activities include soup of life, through which the participants identify the relevance of human rights as outlined in the UDHR with their lives. The activities and games help the participants to connect with their multiple identities. They help participants identify how some identities and status privilege a few while others may prove to be a disadvantage. Through role-play based on discussions within their groups, the participants portray varied situations where forb is denied. The web of life activity helps the participant understand how our lives are interconnected and that we are responsible for each other. The rest of the sessions focus on tactics and strategies to promote forb. The participants through various exercises identified homes, educational institutions, places of worship, and public spaces like roads where the forb is being violated. The participants also mapped the strategies to respond to different issues related to forb like attacks on places of worship, hate speeches, religious conversions, and gender discrimination related to religion.

Participants

This course was offered to post graduate students of Social Work, pursuing their MSW course in the College and participation was voluntary. A total of 33 participants had registered for the course. Of these 31 participants attended 05 modules of the course and 27 attended all the 09 modules.

Majority of the students in the College (almost 95 percent) are from the SC, ST and OBC categories, coming from rural areas and belonging to socially and economically marginalized sections. They come with very limited exposure to the outside world. Many of them have to work as agricultural and daily wage laborers to support their education.

Trainers

Dr. Jalindar Adsule, Principal of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar College of Social work, Prof. Rachna Adsule, Social Activist and Assistant Professor, and Neha Dabhade, Deputy Director of Centre, for Study of Society and Secularism facilitated the course.

Experience of the Course

The Local Change makers Course is an interactive course – including group exercises, games, stories, discussions and role plays as well as presentations. The course was an enriching experience for both the participants as well as the facilitators. In this region there is a strong influence of religion and there is a lot of rigidity as far as religion is concerned. The Corona pandemic had limited the interaction with and amongst the students with classes in online mode for the last two years.

Initially, the students were not very open to discussing religion and related issues. However, gradually after participating in various activities and conducting discussions with the help of illustrations and true stories the students became vocal and were able to express their opinions on freedom of religion. The course was highly interactive.

The Course focused on the area of freedom of religion and belief (forb). There was a positive transformation in the participants. It helped them reflect on the importance of forb in a democracy, and how violations of the forb are linked with privileges and hierarchies in the society that a minority of elite enjoys. They were able to gain a fair understanding about how there has been injustice on minority communities – whether it was in the name of religion, caste or gender. They were also able to understand how there was discrimination and exploitation by own religion.

The journey provided an opportunity for the students to explore their own beliefs, and to express their thoughts in a safe space.

Thank You!

We are thankful to CSSS for providing this opportunity and exposure to students of a small College located in a remote and under-developed area of Morane which was a village up to 2019, and is now a part of the city. Nonetheless, it still has all the rural characteristics and faces problems of basic amenities and lack of electricity due to power cuts every day.

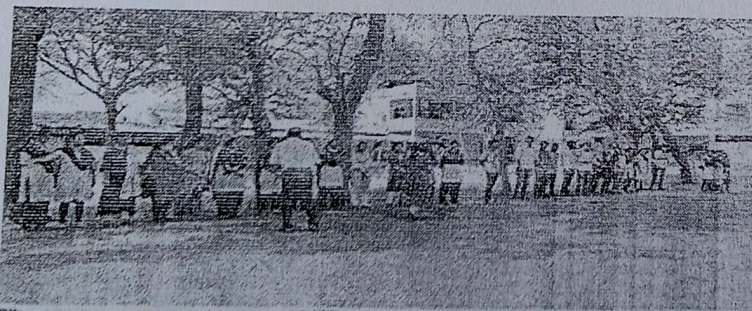


Session one- An introduction to human rights highlighting key agreements, the duties of states and the role ordinary people can play in making rights a reality.

(Trainer – Dr. Rchana Adsule)

Students participating in the Local Change Makers course expressing their views.

(Student- Netal Jadhav)



Session three – one step forward exercise helped participants to think about who is affected by discrimination and other rights violations in their context

(Trainer – Principal Dr.J.B. Adsule)



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