



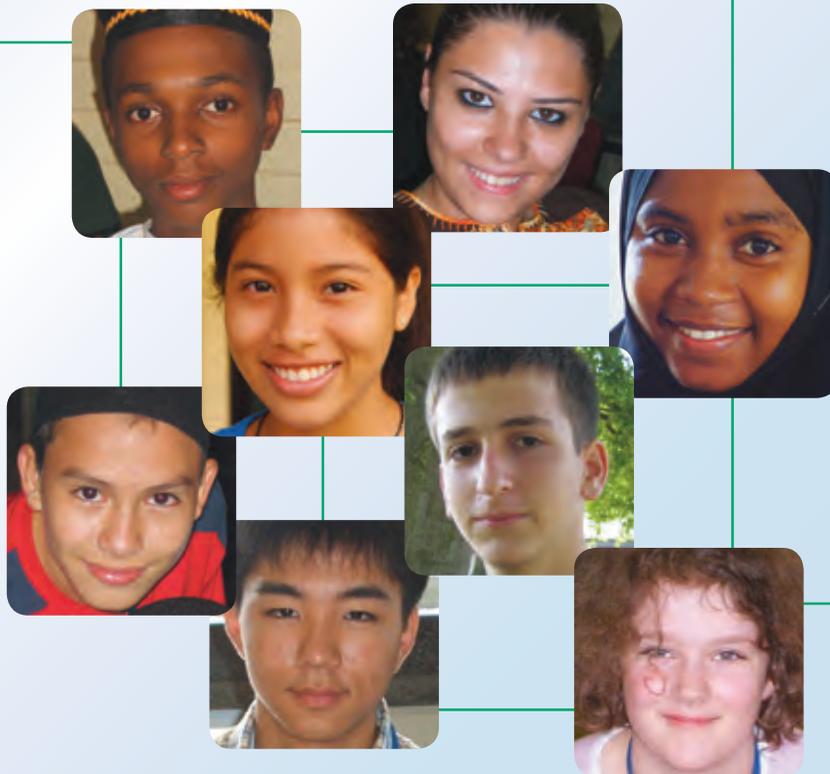
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Learning to Live Together

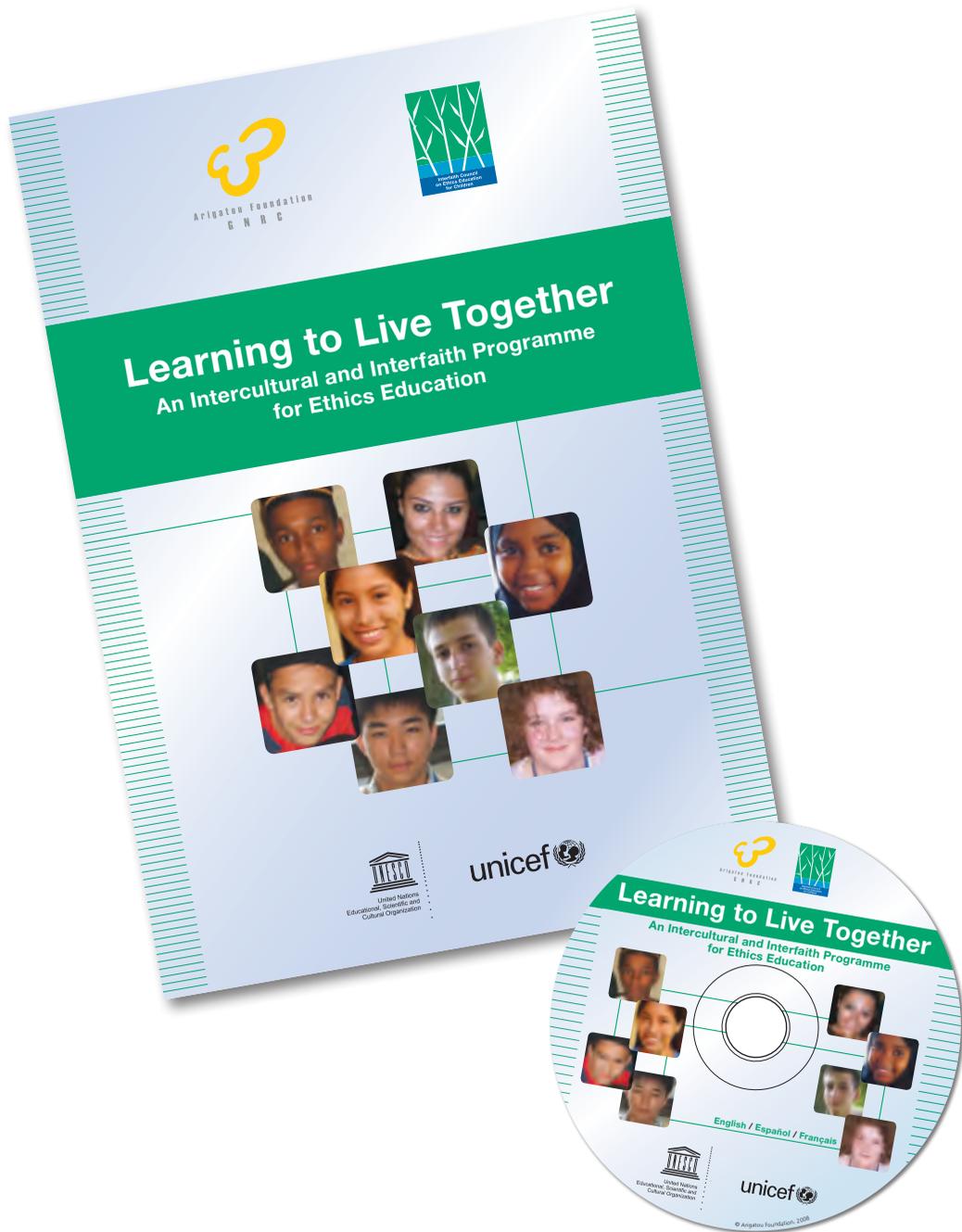
An Intercultural and Interfaith Programme
for Ethics Education

Good Practices Series | Massa-Massar: The Journey



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization





The Good Practices Series provides sound implementation examples of *Learning to Live Together: An Intercultural and Interfaith Programme for Ethics Education*.

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Learning to Live Together

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Foreword

It is not easy to communicate stories about interreligious and intercultural encounters and to testify to the impact of such undertakings. Often one is tempted to resort to big words about harmony and peace, the eternal value of dialoguing, etc. And the more prone to conflict one context is, the more tempting it may be to emulate the ostrich or find coulisses of slogans and proclamations. One would also think that Israel/Palestine would be especially difficult for anyone looking for stories of good practices. This is a piece of land severely implicated in religio-political discourse and it is difficult to make the slightest assertion. ‘Massa-Massar’, or ‘The Journey’, is possibly an exception to this rule. It involves youth from three religious communities, Jews, Christians and Muslims, does not shun the different narratives that nourish each religious community, and provides space for each and every participant to listen to the narrative of the other.

‘Massa-Massar’ tells the story of how young adults from the three religions and the two peoples jointly visit sacred places and listen to each other’s narratives, and embark on a process of un-learning and re-learning in order to take steps toward mutual understanding, conflict transformation and peace building in a context marked by decades of conflict.

GNRC Israel, the Israel chapter of the Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC), used *Learning to Live Together: an Intercultural and Interfaith Programme for Ethics Education* to design and implement the Massa-Massar programme. Under the leadership of Dorit Shippin, GNRC Coordinator for Israel, and Dalia Landau, Founder of the Open House in Ramle, a group of educators and peace workers joined forces in implementing this journey of encounter and discovery, where participants learn about each other’s cultures, faiths, and histories, seek common ground and shared values for mutual understanding, and learn to respect differences.

This booklet is the first in the ‘Good Practices Series,’ a documentation series which aims to tell the story of quality implementations of the ethics education program in various contexts and educational settings. *Learning to Live Together* is the outcome of the initiative on ethics education for children launched by Arigatou International and GNRC. The educational manual was developed in close cooperation with, and with the endorsement of, UNICEF and UNESCO.

We hope that the story of Massa-Massar will convey a sense of how *Learning to Live Together* can be used in situations affected by conflict, and inspire others to develop similar programmes adapted to their specific contexts.

March 2012



Keishi Miyamoto
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Learning to Live Together

Massa-Massar: The Journey

Introduction: The context

The social and political context of Israel/Palestine

Israel is a complex, multifaceted society that presents its young people with many challenges. Today, Israel's children and teens grow up amidst an ongoing conflict that reaches back more than a century.

Israel was established by the Zionist movement as a national homeland for the Jewish people. The main motivations for creating a Jewish state in the land known until 1948 as Palestine were connected to the self-understanding of Jews as a people linked to the 'Land of Israel,' a notion rooted in religious tradition and interpretation of history. Another forceful factor explaining the rise of Zionism was the response of Jews to increasing anti-Semitism in Europe. In a general sense, Zionism must also be seen as an expression of nationalism or 'national awakening' moving toward political independence.

The 'Holocaust,' also known as the *Shoah*, a Hebrew word used to denoting the deliberate and systematic attempt to annihilate all Jews in Germany and the countries it occupied during the Second World War, explained to a great extent the vast international support for the establishment of the state of Israel at that particular moment in history. Following many centuries of persecution of European Jews, the *Shoah* was indeed one of the worst genocides in human history and resulted in the extermination of two thirds of European Jewry.

Before Israel was established as an independent state, Palestine had been part of the British mandate as approved by the League of Nations in 1917. In November 1947 the United Nations decided on a partition of Palestine into a Jewish state and an Arab state. This outcome was not accepted by the Palestinian Arabs or by the leaders of neighbouring Arab countries. Israel declared itself a nation in 1948 and war followed.

Celebrated by Jews as the 'War of Independence,' the 1948-1949 Arab-Israeli war achieved Jewish sovereignty over much of former Palestine and established Israel as a Jewish state with a Jewish majority. The majority of the Palestinians, who had formerly lived within what was now part of Israel but had fled or were made to leave, became refugees. The establishment of the State of Israel is seen by the Palestinian people as a national tragedy and is referred to as 'the Catastrophe' (*Nakba* in Arabic). Till today, Palestinian refugees and their descendants live in diaspora in neighbouring countries and throughout the world.

The Palestinians who remained within the borders of Israel lived largely under military occupation until 1967, when they became full Israeli citizens. Today, the overwhelming majority of Israel's nearly eight million inhabitants are Jews, with about 20% Arab Palestinians. Within the Palestinian population the majority are Sunni Muslims, with a minority of Christians, Druze and other groups.

During its short history, Israel has been engaged in six wars against neighbouring countries (Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon). In the 1967 war, Israel seized the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and the Golan Heights (the latter from Syria) and the Sinai Peninsula (returned to Egypt in 1979). The occupied areas of the West Bank, Jerusalem and Gaza were already inhabited by Palestinians – many of whom were refugees from lands taken during the 1948-1949 war.

Four decades of occupation of Palestinian territories has created a situation of ongoing violence from both sides. Israel is controlling the lives of millions of Palestinians, while simultaneously implementing a program to settle occupied territories with Israeli Jews. The instigation for this settlement program has often been based on a religious rationale. Devout Jews, who constitute a large proportion of the settlers, believe that all of the territories between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea were promised by God to the Jewish people, and therefore should be part of the modern state of Israel.

The position of the international community, as articulated in a series of UN resolutions, is that Israel must withdraw from the territories it occupied in 1967. Since the 1990s, the peace process has aimed for a solution that will result in the establishment of a Palestinian state in these territories. This is known as the ‘two-state solution,’ based on the concept of ‘land in return for peace’. However, the continuing Jewish settlement of Palestinian lands generates a political reality which makes it very difficult to return these territories for the sake of peace. Further obstacles include the fate of Jerusalem, which is regarded as sacred by Jews, Christians, and Muslims alike, and the plight of millions of Palestinian refugees and their descendants.

The importance of interfaith learning programmes in Israel/Palestine

Programmes on interfaith learning are important in Israel because they fill a gap in the educational system. The two populations are segregated and many children grow up in an environment of intolerance, disrespect, and negative stereotypes that is rarely addressed in formal educational programmes.

Non-formal educational programmes in Israel promoting dialogue among young people from the different national and religious groups are necessary to provide an informed understanding of the other, unlearn negative images, and learn to appreciate the diversity in their country.

The Massa-Massar programme, created by the Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC) in Israel, focuses on young Jewish and Arab Israeli citizens born in Israel in the hope that young people sharing the same land and citizenship can become bridges between Jews and Palestinians. In order to serve as peacemakers of the future and to give an example of a possible peaceful existence, they need to understand each other. It is therefore important to nurture their mutual understanding and respect. Massa-Massar is a programme that creates opportunities for them to learn to meet ‘the other’ with empathy and an attitude of reconciliation.

1. What is Massa-Massar?

The Massa-Massar programme is designed as a journey of discovery about oneself, about group identity, and about the other. Participants are in their last years of high school education, a key phase in their development as future young adults. After 12th grade, when they reach the age of 18, Jewish Israelis are called to serve in the army. Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel are not recruited. This in itself creates a big gap between them.

Through this journey of encounter and discovery, participants are expected to learn about each other's culture, faith, and history, seek common ground and shared values for mutual understanding, and learn to respect their differences.

Among the issues raised in the journey are:

- > the dilemma posed by a state established along ethnic lines while attempting to maintain itself as a democracy with a large Palestinian minority;
- > a population that feels the weight of history: on the Jewish side, the recent memory of the Holocaust in which the majority of the Jewish population of Europe was exterminated; on the Palestinian side, memories of a disastrous war that resulted in the exile of most of the Palestinian population;
- > Israel as a half-modern, half-ancient country embodying the meeting of peoples from the West and peoples from the Middle East;
- > an expanding socio-economic gap partly based on ethnicity and racial divisions, where a quarter of the population lives beneath the poverty line;
- > the conflict between secular and religious values, where religion is often unpopular with secular people because of its attempts to influence society at large;
- > a past deeply tied to the origins of the three large monotheistic religions;
- > a highly polarised society, not only between Jews and Palestinians, but also between various subgroups such as Western and Eastern Jews, Muslim, Druze and Christian Arabs as well as secular and religious divisions; and



- > a majority-minority phenomena and related fears manifested on many levels: Arabs as a minority in Israel; Jews as a minority in the Middle East; Christians as a minority within the Arab society; and a Muslim feeling of denigration by the Christian world.

The objectives of Massa-Massar are: to deepen participants' knowledge of themselves and their affiliations; to create a protected, enabling environment where participants can express themselves and

participate in the group, without being judged; to foster a group that can expose itself to conflicts and cope with them; and to encourage participants to take responsibility for disseminating a message that Jews and Arabs in Israel can live a shared, just life despite the difficulties and painful history.

How was Massa-Massar created?

The programme was created by the GNRC in Israel in 2007¹ and was inspired by the *Learning to Live Together* programme developed by Arigatou International in close cooperation with UNESCO and UNICEF. Massa-Massar has been running successfully for three years, and it is presented here as a good practice in using *Learning to Live Together* in areas where religion and culture are often used to intensify a persistent conflict.

The GNRC group formed by the Pluralistic Spiritual Centre of Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam and the Open House in Ramle designed the programme on the basis of the four central values highlighted in the *Learning to Live Together* programme (respect, empathy, responsibility, reconciliation). It aims to promote respect for differences, and empathy in situations of injustice and for the suffering of the other. It also deals with conflict in a spirit of reconciliation and encourages participants to take responsibility for creating a better, more just and peaceful future for everyone in the region.

How are participants selected?

The organisers of Massa-Massar present the programme and the opportunity to participate to Arab as well as to Jewish schools. GNRC member organisations also recommend youth for the programme and previous participants motivate friends to join. Following interviews, participants are selected on the basis of their motivation and willingness to learn more about the other and the situation in their land.

Between 20 and 30 participants are selected every year to ensure interaction in the group. Places are equally distributed between Jews, Christians, and Muslims.

What makes the programme unique?

Massa-Massar is a unique interfaith learning programme in Israel, specifically designed for young people to engage in a real encounter with the other, including opportunities to visit different religious and historical places and listen to stories from both Arabs and Jews.

Massa-Massar touches upon the history of the conflict and the cultures and religions of both groups, not only by talking about them, but also by allowing participants to have experiential encounters. One of the outstanding features of the programme is that it



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1 Read more information about the background of Massa-Massar at www.gnrc.net/en/israel.html

takes participants to areas in their divided land that they would otherwise not be able to visit, to the sacred places of ‘the other,’ by giving them chances to listen to stories that challenge their views and understanding of history, and allowing them to live together for one week.

The encounter and the dialogue itself open doors for participants to think of a reality they may never have seen or heard of before, or to talk about feelings, situations and controversial issues they rarely have the opportunity to discuss with the other.

Another unique element of this programme is its voluntary aspect. It is not a programme run through a school or for the members of a specific organisation or group; it is designed for youth who are interested in participating and discovering more about themselves and others.

Exploring the land of Israel/Palestine



Journeying throughout the country emphasises that the land of Israel/Palestine is divided and not shared. Both Jews and Palestinians have stories to tell in relation to their histories and religious traditions. By visiting different places, the group experiences some of these stories told by Jews and Palestinians of various religious backgrounds.

The land presents a contradiction in that it brings Arabs and Jews together and at the same time glaringly highlights their current inability to share the land. It is precisely this contradiction that helps participants to internalise the need to transform the conflict in a way that all can affirm as just.

Exploring the land is not only an experience-based methodology, but a cornerstone for dialogue to help the participants talk about the conflict beyond its religious and political connotations.

Using Arabic and Hebrew

The programme is run in Arabic and Hebrew, both official languages in Israel. While most Palestinians understand both Arabic and Hebrew, in Israel’s segregated school system Arabic is rarely taught to Jewish students in a way that enables them to properly use it. In Massa-Massar, participants speak in their mother tongue and bilingual facilitators interpret for those who do not speak both languages. This bilingual setting of the programme challenges the view of Hebrew as “the only” language in Israel. This intentional approach helps participants reflect about equality in a society where language can be a tool for exploitation, discrimination, exclusive nationalism and intimidation.

‘I learned today that when a person is attached to his land, if he worked hard to get it and gave everything for it, he can’t give it up. The land is the only place that humans always come back to.’

It is important that in a programme based on *Learning to Live Together*, the principles of mutual understanding and respect are not only discussed, but lived out by facilitators and participants during the journey.

Ensuring a balanced facilitators' team

The main facilitators of the Massa-Massar journey are selected according to their experience in working with Arab and Jewish young people. They are expected to be familiar with participatory and experiential methodologies, be bilingual and have previously worked within interfaith programmes. In order to ensure balance and equality in the team, the organisers take gender, cultural and religious background and experience into consideration when selecting the facilitators.

Listening to parallel narratives

In this conflicted land, there are two parallel narratives that are rarely told together.

The Jewish narrative of the historical, religious connection to the land, and the painful exile, persecution and genocide of the Jewish people is told to every Jew around the world and to every Israeli since early childhood. Recent history and the story of the establishment of the State of Israel are told from a Jewish Zionist perspective.



'The most challenging thing for me when I participated in this program two years ago was to see how much the other side suffers. Usually each person looks at his own side, but when you look at the other side, feelings come up and it becomes more difficult. So it's not just having fun, it really is trying to understand the other side and to talk about it.'

The Palestinian narrative as the native people of this land with their national and religious connection to it and the painful story of the *Nakba* is a story missing in both Hebrew and Arabic text books in Israel.

Massa-Massar provides participants with an opportunity to listen to both stories together. For the first time they hear narratives that are parallel and at the same time contradicting one another. This initiates a process enabling, at best, unlearning, or at least creating a new space for understanding the other. This approach challenges the participants and helps them comprehend their own identity in relation to others.

Methodologies and techniques

Learning to Live Together recommends five main methodologies conducive to interfaith learning and ethics education. These methodologies are based on experience, introspection, discussion, problem solving, and cooperation.

Each methodology is adapted to the content of the programme and uses several learning techniques such as field visits, focus groups, games, sports, meditation, arts, roundtables, experience sharing, simulations, storytelling, and role playing.

Experience-based learning



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Massa-Massar uses an experience-based methodology as the main foundation of the journey. Each day of the programme, participants have the opportunity to visit a place connected to the history of the land, or to travel around the country to explore it and meet people.

Field trips are designed to visit religious places associated with Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Visits vary from one year to another depending on the programme's design, the distance between places and the areas of the country visited.

'Never in my life did I expect myself to enter such a place [the Western Wall]... I was afraid; I never expected to enter that place... Why was I afraid? Maybe because I am afraid of religious Jews and maybe because of the way they looked at me – an Arab woman wearing the hijab, entering a place sacred for Jews. When I was in the Western Wall I was nervous, nervous from how the Jews looked at me. Not a judgmental look but a questioning look – like you are a stranger and what are you doing here? But I was happy that I tried something new in my life.'

Visits help participants put themselves in another's shoes and encourage them to recognise and possibly begin to understand the religious identity of the other. Each visit is followed by discussions to nurture the individual and collective reflection process.



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Visiting a *kibbutz* of Holocaust survivors built on the land of a demolished Palestinian village one year after its destruction, presents immediate contradicting narratives. There are meetings with Jews, whose parents were victims of the *Shoah*. Participants are taken to the Ghetto Fighters' House Museum, to Druze neighbourhoods and to meet religious and secular people working in human rights organisations.

Every year the programme takes participants to Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam, a cooperative village of Jews and Israeli Palestinian Arabs, in order to learn about cooperation and peace and to begin imagining how their society can be transformed.

Introspection-based learning

Introspection-based methodologies are fundamental to the *Learning to Live Together* programme. These methodologies help participants go beyond the intellect, assess their own state of mind, and focus on their experience.

Every day of the journey begins with ten minutes of silent meditation. During this time, participants are quiet and observe their breathing, trying to keep focused on this simple yet demanding task. These sessions prepare them to find peace within and learn how to connect with their breathing. This ancient technique helps to quiet the mind, and is a key tool to manage anger and frustration in difficult circumstances. Meditation sessions are designed to equip participants with essential skills to respond peacefully to challenging situations.

Similarly, every evening of the journey comes to a close in a circle in which participants have a chance to talk about what they experienced during the day. These introspective spaces allow youth to find balance between both pleasant and challenging experiences. They also provide an opportunity for participants to listen to one another without prejudices or judgment. They sit together and listen carefully to one another, with the objective, not to create an argument, but to understand each other with mind and heart. These spaces are usually not readily available in their respective communities.

Discussion-based learning

Specific sessions are designed to get participants into meaningful dialogues about each other, for instance about the land they share and the conflict. During these sessions, facilitators use drawings, case studies, images and other pedagogical techniques to engage participants in constructive dialogues.

This process requires that issues be approached from participants' experiences, stories they heard, their own ideas and feelings. The group discusses issues related to the daily interactions of Arabs and Jews, challenges they face in living together in the same land, and how to coexist in equality and justice.

Discussion sessions are a time in the programme to bring forth dialectical arguments about present and future issues or conflicts. They help participants focus, not anymore on the inequalities and injustices in their society, but on what can be done to improve the situation.

Discussions are organised in plenary, in pairs, and within bi-national or mixed groups, and conclusions are recorded to allow participants to visualise diverse opinions and points of view. Discussions are mainly held after the experiential activities where participants have learned and been exposed to issues that may be unfamiliar to them. After the experience-based activities, discussion sessions allow participants to connect their thoughts, get new understandings, and reach new insights.

Self-assessment techniques

Learning Log

In the beginning of the programme participants are introduced to a booklet where they can register their experiences and reflections. It is the *Learning to Live Together*'s primary tool to encourage participants to assess their own learning and deepen their understanding through reflection.²

This Learning Log is designed with open questions about each day to help youth remember the day's experiences and interactions.³

Group sharing model

Massa-Massar uses the Group Sharing Model⁴ highlighted in the *Learning to Live Together* manual to promote individual and collective introspection. It is also used as a tool for facilitators to find out about the learning process each participant goes through, frustrations, challenges and progress during the journey.

During a sharing moment, facilitators may use a candy and a rock to symbolise enjoyable or difficult moments respectively, passing them to each participant for him or her to tell about his or her own experiences. The use of symbolic elements helps participants open up and prompts them to reflect about their experiences.

Impact assessment

The impact assessment forms⁵ provided in the *Learning to Live Together* manual to measure whether the programme has impacted the knowledge, ethical behaviours, attitudes and abilities of the participants or not, are filled in before and after the Massa-Massar.

Even though it is very difficult to measure change in participants' behaviour, attitudes and ways of thinking, the impact assessment forms function as barometers that indicate change in perceptions.

After the Massa-Massar, follow-up sessions extend the journey and help participants find ways to work together and make real contributions to peace and reconciliation in their respective communities. These activities and concrete projects are also analysed through the programme's impact assessment.

² For further information about the Learning Log, see *Learning to Live Together*, 'Monitoring Progress,' p. 53.

³ The Learning Log used during the 2009 Massa-Massar (in English, Arabic and Hebrew) is available upon request.

⁴ *Learning to Live Together*, p. 56.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 230-232.

2. How are Learning to Live Together's modules used in Massa-Massar?

Learning to Live Together's modules and kiosks are customised to the needs of the programme, with carefully selected activities that emphasise unlearning, challenging prejudices, empathising with the other's suffering and realising the significance of injustice.

In the planning sessions, facilitators discuss the programme's objectives and map out the learning process they want to devise for participants. For each stage they select kiosks from the learning modules, and for each kiosk, plan activities that will take participants along an outer and inner journey of discovery.

Pre-journey, journey and post-journey

Massa-Massar can be divided into pre-journey, journey and post-journey phases. In the pre-journey stage participants initiate a process of self-discovery and appreciation of the other. In this stage the kiosks 'Appreciating diversity' or 'Acknowledge myself in relation to others' are used.

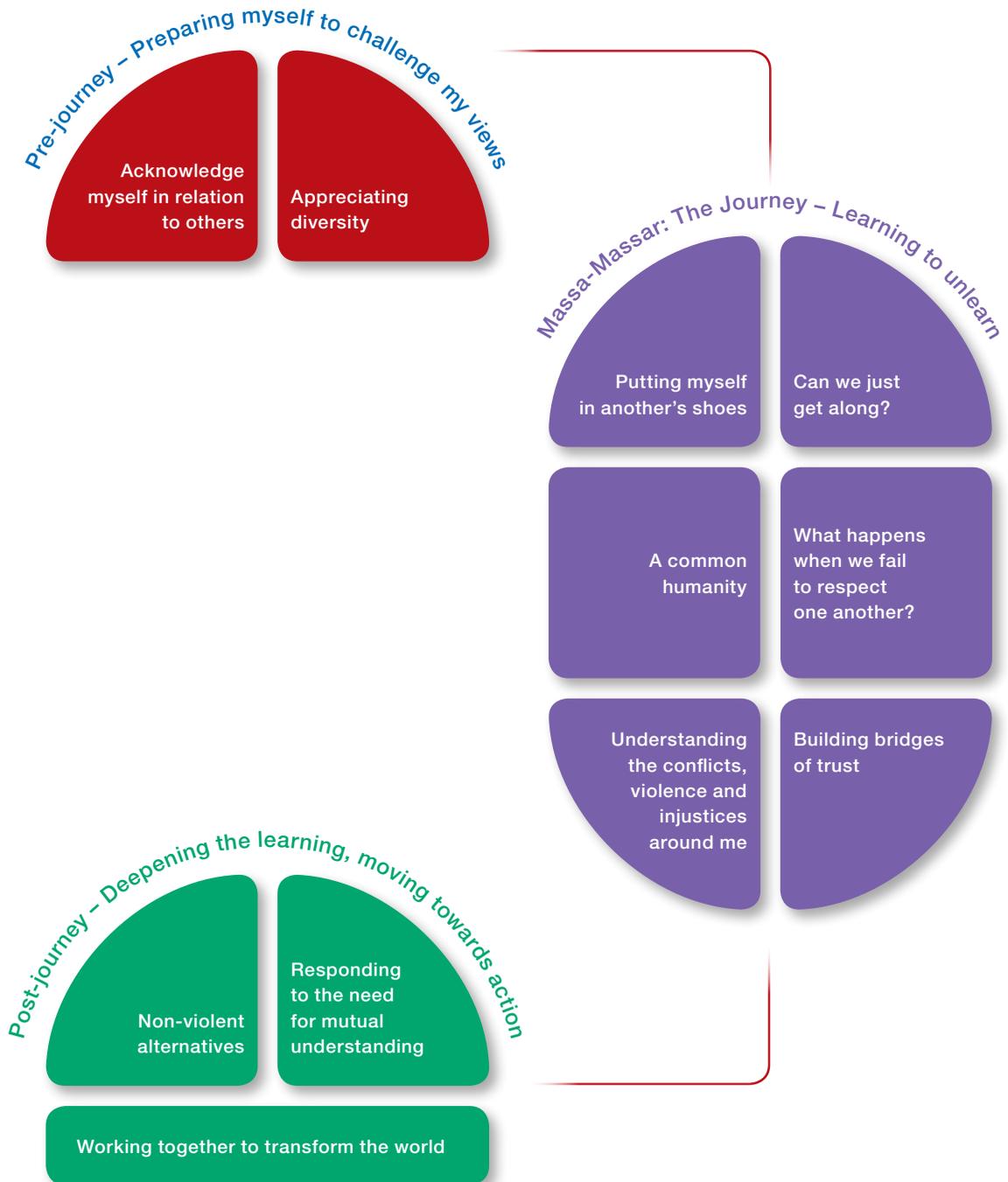
During the journey the following kiosks of the first learning module are selected: 'A common humanity,' 'Putting myself in another's shoes,' and 'Can we just get along?' During this stage, reflections about identity, especially collective identities, and understanding diversity are developed, complementing the learning initiated during the pre-journey sessions. Through the kiosks of the second module: 'What happens when we fail to respect one another,' 'Conflicts, violence and injustices around me,' and 'Building bridges of trust,' the journey itself deepens participants' understanding of the conflict and touches upon related difficult questions.

During the entire journey participants go through the kiosk 'Peace begins with me,' which is developed as a golden thread for the programme.

The post-journey phase works with the kiosks 'Non-violent alternatives' and 'Working together to transform the world' These kiosks not only complement the discussions and experiences of the journey, but also inspire participants to take it upon themselves to do something concrete from within their own circle of influence.

Concepts such as structural and cultural violence reverberate and oblige participants to reflect on the potential of the Jewish-Palestinian communities for peace and reconciliation. The entire journey is in fact a significant contribution towards transformation of societies. By bringing the groups together through this intentional encounter, participants initiate a process of breaking prejudices and unlearning negative images and perceptions of the other. They open up to enter into dialogue and get equipped to break the cycle of injustices and genuinely relate to one another in equal and peaceful ways.

The following section explains how each module is customised to the programme, how kiosks are adapted and what activities are used. The objective of each kiosk is adapted to the topic of the journey, keeping in line with the approach of *Learning to Live Together*. Some activities are drawn from the manual while others were proposed by facilitators.



Pre-journey – Preparing myself to challenge my views

This stage serves as a way to prepare participants for the journey, helping them to feel better acquainted with what is going to happen during the programme, with the others and with themselves.

This stage takes place a couple of weeks before the journey or during its first day. It helps participants set their expectations and transform fear into interest and willingness to learn.

Acknowledge myself in relation to others

This kiosk takes participants on a journey to explore themselves and their identities, as a first step to acknowledging others and finding connections with them. Activities in this kiosk prepare participants to reflect on their common roots.



Activities

Drawing



Participants are asked to draw the place where they come from, and then share their drawing with the group.

They often realise that even though some come from the same places their drawings are quite different. They also discover facts about places that they were unaware of. Some reflect on why those places are important to them.

This activity helps participants reflect individually about themselves and collectively about the land they share and its importance for everyone. They hopefully become aware of, and interested in, discovering more about each other during the journey.

Massa-Massar: The Journey – Learning to unlearn

A common humanity

This kiosk takes participants to experience communities where Arabs and Jews live together and share common responsibilities. It also helps them connect to one another and discover each other.



Activities

Visit to Neve-Shalom/Wahat al-Salam

Neve-Shalom/Wahat al-Salam⁶ is a village established jointly by Jewish and Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel. Its inhabitants are engaged in educational work for peace, equality and understanding between the two peoples. It is the only community in the country established jointly by Jews and Palestinians, and where they reside in equal numbers. Neve-Shalom/Wahat al-Salam is an example of mutual understanding and respect.



Massa-Massar participants are introduced to the history of the village and the activities organised among Arabs and Jews. Youth who live in the village describe their lives in this egalitarian community. While walking in the streets of Neve-Shalom/Wahat al-Salam, participants learn about the way the villagers coexist and make decisions together, and about the type of educational projects they run.

This activity challenges the paradigm that people must live separated from each other according to their national, cultural or religious backgrounds, and exposes participants to a reality unknown to most of them. It is an opportunity to realise that harmonious coexistence is possible between Arabs and Jews, and it allows participants to reflect on justice and equality as stepping-stones on the road to peace.

Campfire

The objective of the campfire is to bring participants together and prepare them for a joint learning process. By creating an environment for sharing and fellowship, participants start challenging their views about the other.

Participants are tasked with preparing the campfire and then play some icebreakers and activities. During this process they learn about each other, get acquainted and start discovering similarities beyond their cultural or religious backgrounds.

6 <http://nswas.org>

Participants sit together around the fire and listen to each other. Facilitators find a moment during the campfire to engage participants in reflections about the day, their fears, and their first lessons learned. It is an opportunity for team building and finding connections with one another.

Putting myself in another's shoes

This kiosk takes participants to each other's religious places, and to visit areas where resource persons tell them real-life stories, and discuss the history and culture of the land from both Palestinian and Jewish perspectives. It is a walk to challenge prejudices, and learn to listen to one another.



Activities

Interfaith visits

Participants are taken to Jerusalem to learn more about religion by visiting the sacred places of each religious tradition. The methodology used is experiential, combining reflection and discussions. Before entering each other's sacred places, Jerusalem-based representatives of the various religious traditions lead visits, which provide historical information and help create a safe atmosphere,



In 2009, the group visited the Dome of the Rock on the Temple Mount. A Muslim Sufi Sheikh spoke about the importance of the Al-Aqsa mosque and the significance of the area not only for Muslims, but also for Christians and Jews.

Participants then walked through the Old City markets until they reached the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, where they learned about Christianity. A Catholic nun explained the importance of the site and guided participants through the church where she explained the meaning of various images.

In the evening they visited the Western Wall, The guide explained the importance of the place and provided historical facts. Those who wished to went inside, wrote down a prayer, and inserted it in the wall, as is commonly practiced by Jews.

This activity is likely to bring about mixed feelings among participants, but may help in challenging prejudices and stereotypes of the other. During the reflection time, participants expressed the fears, the excitement, as well as the sense of discovery they had felt when entering these places.



A Muslim Arab girl said: 'I was very moved to see the grave of Yeshua and the believers around it who were crying... I have never been inside a church; this is my first time.' A Muslim Arab boy remarked: 'I often come to Jerusalem but this is my first time in a church'. A Jewish boy shared his impression: 'I learned a lot today about Christianity and that was something new for me; I never had a chance to learn about Christianity before.'

Can we just get along?

Through sharing and learning about their respective identities, this kiosk encourages participants to discuss the challenges of meeting one another. It allows them to see beyond their national and religious identities, and to reflect on the importance of respecting the different identities of the people in their land.



Activities

Cultural evening

The cultural evening is a place and time to learn more about identities. The main objective is to reflect about the importance of respecting and learning how to get along in difference.



During one of the workshop's evenings, participants group by national identity and present some of their religious and cultural customs.

They are asked to prepare a role-play that shows a particular ceremony or event, using traditional costumes and objects. The process of preparing the role-play as a national group helps participants to strengthen their identity and also creates a space for a free expression in a mixed setting.

Participants may share with the group what they consider important in their beliefs and culture. They bring objects, pictures, drawings, religious symbols, songs or any other material to express what they consider important. This helps them engage in discussions about their identity, how it is expressed in different ways, and the importance of respecting it.

The cultural evening ends with Arabic and Jewish music in a relaxed atmosphere.

Our Map

Our Map is another activity that brings about discussions on identities and respect.

Participants are divided into three groups, and provided a blank map of Israel/Palestine. They are asked to mark the various population areas with colours: Arabs, Jews, Christians, Muslims, etc. The process of painting the map creates an opportunity for sharing ideas and discussing issues in relation to each place.

After the map is drawn, each group explains where they located the different areas and why. These maps become a basis for discussing issues between the country's various populations, and to reflect about the complexities of their relations.



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What happens when we fail to respect one another?

This kiosk takes participants to visit the separation wall, the Holocaust museum, Palestinian villages that were demolished, the Ghetto Fighters' House Museum, among others. They listen to painful stories about injustices and inequalities. The activities in this kiosk help them reflect on the consequences of failing to respect one another.



Activities

Learning from real-life stories and field visits

Participants are exposed to the different narratives told from the perspective of Jews and Palestinians. The group is taken to places where human rights activists will share stories of injustices, inequalities, struggles and, yet, positive learning.

'Suddenly I understood how hard the situation is in East Jerusalem, how people have to fight to keep their houses.'

A Jewish boy

For many participants, this is their first opportunity ever to freely listen, share and talk about these situations in a mixed group, and to express their views in front of the other in a safe environment.

Participants are exposed to stories of injustice from both communities. For Palestinian participants, the facts are not new, since they themselves in their communities are exposed to the same kind of injustices. For some Jewish participants it may be the first time to listen to such stories.

'The hardest thing for me today was listening to Saleem's story, about how they demolished their house three times and how when they came, they took him, his wife and his children out of the house, demolished it and left, as if nothing happened.'

An Arab boy

This encounter with a different reality creates a variety of reactions. It may strengthen participants' national identity as a group, bring about reflections about discrimination, and hopefully make them empathic with the other. Sometimes, though, Jewish participants have felt that the focus has been too much on the Palestinian side, or have doubts about the version of the events they have heard. Participants on both sides often experience frustration, silence, sadness and powerlessness. This is part of the journey, and this activity is critical to bringing them together to discuss the core of the conflict.

After visiting the Memorial Holocaust Museum:

'It was very sad to see the shoes of children killed in the Holocaust. I felt that architecture has a message and they did not just build the building that way by chance.'

An Arab girl

'It was hard for me to hear about what happened to the Jews in the Holocaust. I never heard about it this way.'

An Arab boy

Understanding the conflicts, violence and injustices around me

This kiosk brings participants to understand the consequences of the conflict, injustices and violence in their country. Activities in this kiosk help them explore the conflict from different angles and to exchange and share their views and ideas.



Activities

Interactive dialogue⁷

Here participants discuss injustices and inequalities in their land and exchange different views about specific issues affecting Israel/Palestine.

They are asked to say words that come to their mind when they think about their land. The youth, divided in groups of four or five, select a word and discuss its significance in their personal and social reality. After some time in each group, participants come to the plenary and share their conclusions.

Other discussions are organised around specific words, such as 'education,' or 'language,' and how they are currently applied in participants' contexts. This brings to light the consequences of the conflict, and help visualise how to bring about mutual respect and justice.

Another way to promote dialogue among participants is through narratives and family histories. In plenary, participants are asked about their experiences during the journey and how this relates to their lives and families. In small groups, Jews and Arabs boys and girls share their stories as the third generation after the Holocaust and the *Nakba*.

Participants discuss differences between the two groups, which lead them to address the core of the conflict. After the past is acknowledged, the group is getting ready to think about solutions for a better future for all. They address coexistence through topics such as the character of the State (Jewish, democratic, the law of return, the

⁷ In 2009, the discussion activities were organised by the School for Peace of Neve Shalom/Wahat al Salam.

flag, the hymn...); borders (settlements, Jerusalem, refugees); education (mixed/separate schools for Jews and Arabs, what we learn from history books, language).



In order to create an enabling environment for dialogue, the group is first divided into Arabic-speaking and Hebrew-speaking youth, creating an opportunity for them to share what they might feel uncomfortable sharing in the larger group.

'I learned that Kerem and I share the same story, in both of our families there were Holocaust victims. I also realised that most of our (Jewish) grandparents were not born here.'

A Jewish participant

In 2008, the Arab group talked about the connection and the strong bond between them. They felt that they had known one another for a long time. They expressed disappointment that the Jewish group was not responsive enough and that there was no one with whom to argue.



'The fact that their [the Jewish participants'] grandparents were born here says something about belonging. We have a connection to the land. Suddenly it is taken from you. The Jews came and took our land and sent us away from it.'

An Arab participant

In 2009, the Jewish group spoke about their discomfort with the Arab participants. They felt the Arabs lacked respect when speaking Arabic together, ignoring the fact that most Jewish participants did not understand the language. They were upset about jokes that the Arab participants had made and felt it was difficult to deal with and relate to them. They felt it was difficult to be a minority in a predominantly Arab-speaking group.



The division in groups helps make participants feel more comfortable talking about the issues that affect them. It eases the tensions when interacting with one another and it provides the space for a genuine and open dialogue.

Building bridges of trust

This kiosk helps to improve the communication in the group and allows participants to work as a team. Activities are designed to challenge and motivate them to work together and discover each other.



Activities

Playing together



During the journey, sports and games are designed to bring participants together and build bridges of trust among them.

Youth are taken for a boat trip, ice-skating or kayaking in the sea. This is an opportunity for participants to bond, experience challenges together and find ways to support each other.

Games and sports are important tools for easing tensions in the group and breaking the intensity of the discussions and experiences.



It allows participants to have fun while learning about each other, and creates space to build trust as well as to get to know each other's strengths and fears.

Peace begins with me

The activities of this kiosk are spread throughout the journey. They are designed to help participants cope with the different feelings, frustrations, fears and emotions that the journey brings about. This kiosk is an opportunity for participants to reflect about how to go beyond the situation they live in and address its contradictions.



Activities

What spirituality means to me

This activity aims at encouraging participants to connect to their spiritual identity and strength. During the journey they are faced with many dilemmas where they ask themselves ‘Who am I?’ and ‘Where do I stand in all this?’ Participants are encouraged to look for connections between religion and spirituality.

Facilitators spread about 20 paper squares on the floor with concepts written on them: money, car, power, love, etc. The squares are placed upside down. Each in turn, participants choose a square and give their opinion about the concept in question. The facilitators ask them if the meaning of these words is spiritual for them and why.

The discussion is designed to address questions such as: ‘Does our society invest time and thought in spiritual matters?’; ‘Do we accept our way of life as self-evident?’; ‘What are the important things surfacing in our relationships with others and life in community?’

Participants usually struggle with definitions and understandings, which lead them to reflect on the importance of going beyond stereotypes and preconceived ideas and images. Through discussions, participants share their understanding of spirituality and its significance to them.

Discussions after this activity also allow participants to reflect about contradictions they experience in their lives. Opting for justice and equality in a country, where those concepts are difficult to apply or trying to be inclusive living in a segregated society, are some of the dilemmas participants might express. For Jews, contradictions may be to serve in the military when they want to work for peace, and for Arabs, to leave behind their native language and embrace Hebrew in order to be accepted in society.

This activity is a tool for introspection to find inner peace and strength. It helps participants connect with the stories heard and the experiences they have gone through. Referring to the story of a man who rebuilt his house after each of the five times it had been destroyed, one participant remarked that to resist in a non-violent manner is a spiritual action.

Post-Journey — Deepening the learning, moving towards action

Non-violent alternatives

This kiosk encourages participants to learn about non-violent initiatives and explore possibilities for them to get involved in peace initiatives. Activities in this kiosk encourage participants to develop projects to create awareness about injustices in their society.



Activities

Ideally, Massa-Massar is a one-year program, where participants go through a long process together, including the pre-journey, the journey itself and the post-journey stages. Immediately after the journey, the group gets together to celebrate, remember the programme, review the experience and decide on the next steps. Parents are also invited to the event.



After the 2008 Massa-Massar, one participant invited the group to her Palestinian-Arab village in the north of Israel. She wanted the group to participate in a day of commemoration of one tragic event during the military occupation of 1948-1967, where village inhabitants were killed by the Israeli army.

In turn, a participant from the mixed town of Ramle invited the group to her home to tell them about her neighbourhood, her community, and the challenges of living in a mixed Arab/Jewish town in Israel.

Meetings are arranged monthly or bimonthly. Participants are encouraged to propose ideas for projects. The projects can be connected to what they learned and experienced during the journey or to deepen some of the issues discussed. They can initiate action-oriented activities like helping to clean up a neighbourhood, town or village, helping with summer activities for Jewish/Arab children, etc.

3. Challenges

Massa-Massar faces five main challenges in the preparation and implementation phases.

Recruitment of youth. As a general rule, it is challenging to get youth interested in participating in the programme. In particular, it is harder to get Jewish participants to join than Arabs. The reasons are threefold:

Jews as the majority group are not motivated unless there is encouragement from parents or teachers. Arabs as a minority group hope to be listened to and mostly want to change the status quo of their situation as the minority often ignored and discriminated against. Jews are reluctant to meet those they have learned to consider as ‘the enemy.’ Most Jewish Israeli youth of this age have never met a

Palestinian Arab on a personal level. They cannot communicate in Arabic and know very little about Arab culture.

Since they belong to a majority that enjoys more privileges and resources, Jewish young people have access to many informal extracurricular activities: youth movements, clubs, etc. Some Jewish families also take their children abroad during vacations.

Selection of participants. The programme needs youth who are willing to participate in a journey marked with ‘first time’ experiences, dilemmas, painful stories and challenges. Sharing a journey of mutual discovery requires a certain level of maturity and openness from participants. Leadership skills are also important selection criteria since the programme aims at investing in change agents who can go on to transform the status quo in their society.

Interaction. During the programme, interaction between Arabs and Jews can be tense and complex. Few of them have had an opportunity to live with people from other national or religious groups in the country. They often come to the workshop with fears, misconceptions and stereotypes, which are not easy to allay, unless the facilitators are well prepared to deal with the issues, and the programme provides spaces for deep discussions and reflections.

Language. Including both Arabic and Hebrew in the programme has proven challenging. Most of the time, the Palestinians prefer to express themselves in Hebrew, which is the language they use most in school and society in general. It is natural that the language of the majority will be dominant. Working with translation also slows down the process and some participants lose patience from time to time. However, the experience with previous programmes proves that the effort is worthwhile and helps to create an equal and just environment.

Continuation. After the journey ends, participants are encouraged to meet again to continue exploring issues that were discussed during the programme and to learn more about non-violent alternatives. It is not always easy to bring them together again due to studies, travel distances and other commitments participants may have. The post-journey meetings also require human and additional financial resources. A trained youth leader or facilitator must be involved in this stage to ensure a fruitful continuation of the dialogue and action plans.

Every year, the facilitators’ team has very intense preparatory meetings to find innovative ways to overcome these challenges and improve the programme based on the lessons learned the previous year.

4. Impact assessment

The impact of Massa-Massar is measured in three different ways: impact assessment forms; participants' reflections; participants' involvement in post-journey activities

Impact assessment forms

The forms are taken from the *Learning to Live Together* manual and distributed to participants before and after the journey. Questions are divided in three categories – knowledge, attitudes and skills – which help facilitators understand the changes, if any, in perceptions, ideas, opinions and behaviours.



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Most participants state that after the journey they have more knowledge about the religion and beliefs of the other, and about his or her holy places and traditions. They show basic understanding of the causes of the injustices in their society, and most of them cite discrimination and lack of mutual understanding and respect as main causes.

A majority of participants say before and after the journey that they do not know of many peace initiatives in their country. In the post-journey

period, facilitators prepare activities to introduce participants to initiatives using non-violent alternatives to promote justice and equality.

Most participants express their willingness to listen to others' points of view and ideas and learn from them, although they say it is easier to be a friend of someone who shares their own beliefs and ways of thinking. They say they can connect better with each other since they already understand each other, they think alike and that this allows them to prevent fights.

Participants also express their willingness to be more inclusive of others when making decisions, and to be considerate with their points of view and opinions. Most participants state that they only respect those who respect them.

There is a clear change in the way participants say they would react in a situation when someone is discriminated against. Some of them would have preferred in the beginning not to intervene, just ignore the situation, or react violently. After the journey, most participants respond that they would try to help because they could be in the same situation, would demand equal treatment, or would try to mediate. In other similar questions they also mentioned they would try to persuade others to respect the person who is discriminated against.

Some of the answers after the journey also show that participants are more willing to engage in dialogue with others and discuss their differences. However, some answers still express violent ways to deal with a specific situation.

Participants' reflections

During and after the programme, participants express their feelings, learning and challenges. Those are recorded by facilitators to analyse the process youth are going through.

At the end of the programme facilitators use an activity with photos for participants to express the changes in their perceptions during the journey. They are asked to choose a photo that represents the way they felt when they came to the journey and another one that shows how they feel at the end.



Some of the answers are:

'In the beginning of the journey I looked like in this picture – alone – but now I do not want to stay alone; I am looking all the time for someone to talk to.'

'In the beginning I was closed in my own opinion and now I learned to see things from another perspective.'

'Before the journey I did not believe that we can change anything; now I feel that we have the power to change reality.'

'Before the journey I thought that there is no chance for peace. I did not know what the "other side" was thinking. In the second photo that I chose you can see a green plant growing in the desert. This is the plant of peace.'



'There are many things that changed in me. One of them is the way I think. In the beginning I didn't really want to participate in the program, because I was afraid. But after we got to know the other side, we found out that both sides didn't have enough awareness or knowledge about each person and his history. My view of the Jewish people and what they think about us changed, and I think their view about us changed as well.'



'I think that something changed in me. I didn't really know Arabs before I came to this Massar. People always think that there are cultural and behavioural gaps in their body language, and all the things they usually do and how they express themselves, but it's not true. Both of us like to laugh, talk and play. In general, we are very similar and there is something that is bothering the connection between us, Jews and Arabs, and we have to find out what it is.'



‘During the Massar we had a discussion in the whole group about discrimination between Jews and Arabs in Israel. It was very hard for me to talk about this subject because I live it, feel it and experience it in my life. But what was beautiful was that all Jews who were there acknowledged that there is discrimination between us and them.’



‘In the Massa-Massar, I learned about other religions different from mine, that I don’t meet in my everyday life. When I saw the other side, I understood why they think that way, why their opinions are like that. Just acknowledging the fact that there are other opinions was a step forward for me.’

Participants’ involvement in post-journey activities

Most participants in Massa-Massar want to continue with activities and are willing to continue meeting each other. Although organising post-journey activities proves quite challenging, there is willingness to meet and work together for peace and mutual understanding and respect. This is reflected in the number of youth attending post journey activities, and their involvement in organising the programme during the following year.

After each programme, parents are invited together with youth for a review meeting, where everyone shares their learning and impressions of the journey.

One of the parents said: ‘I can advise other parents, Arabs and Jews, that this programme will really benefit the children because they will be alone without the parents and they will see many subjects that they can’t see in any other place. They will remember the things they will experience at this age for a very long time.’

Another parent said: ‘In my opinion, when somebody gets to know the other, the hatred and anger towards them lessens. Dealing with the other is very important in a country like ours that has many sides, languages and people.’

Facilitators invite youth to continue attending other activities as part of the post-journey phase. During this stage, youth propose initiatives to deepen the knowledge and experience acquired during the journey. As a result, participants have visited other villages to continue learning about the history of their land, went to the desert to share their impressions after the journey, and attended child rights activities organised by the GNRC.

Some of the first participants have become facilitators of the programme during the following years, organising activities, leading some of the reflection sessions and sharing their experiences and new understandings. These outcomes show that the youth who participated in the Massa-Massar have understood the importance of raising awareness among other youth, and are willing to work for justice and equality.

Conclusion: Replicating Massa-Massar in other contexts

When replicating Massa-Massar in another context, it is recommended to take the following elements taken into consideration:

Understanding of the Learning to Live Together programme. Before replicating this programme, it is suggested to go through the *Learning to Live Together* manual. Read carefully the initial part, understand the principles and concepts and internalise what they mean for the programme you want to organise. Familiarise yourself with the methodologies, techniques, learning process and assessment models described in the manual.

Selecting facilitators. Select facilitators with experience working with youth from different cultural and religious backgrounds. In the case of a conflict situation, it is recommended that representatives of both sides of the conflict are involved in all stages from planning to implementation in equal number and status. Be sensitive to the power relations in a conflict.

Training on the Learning to Live Together manual. Make sure that all the members of your facilitators' team are familiar with the manual. Organise one or several meetings with them to discuss the main thrust of the educational programme and the approach. Make sure everyone feels comfortable using the manual and the methodologies.

Preparing facilitators. In case of an ongoing conflict, even if it is not active or violent, facilitators need to know about it, read materials and deeply understand both sides of the conflict. Facilitators need to bring to the planning stage enough knowledge about the conflict. It is recommended at this stage to invite experts to share their knowledge about the issues with the facilitators.

Preparing the experiential activities. Ensure a proper preparation of visits to religious places and other field visits. Engage people who understand your programme and share your vision of justice and mutual respect. Select places that represent both groups and can give the participants a balanced view and understanding of the issues you are presenting.

Selecting participants. It is important to have a meeting with the youth interested in joining the programme and clarify the objectives of the journey.

Selecting methodologies. The different types of methodologies suggested in the manual can be used. You can decide to focus only on two or three. However, make sure that there is space for experience, dialogue, introspection, sharing and individual and collective reflections.

Assessing the programme. Use the impact assessment forms, record the learning, challenges, fears and experiences of the participants. This will help you to understand the learning process during the programme and assess the impact of the journey.

Sharing the experience. Contact Arigatou International or the coordinator of GNRC Israel to share how you have replicated this good practice. If you also need any help in the preparatory process, do not hesitate to get in touch with the Coordinator of GNRC Israel.

How to get involved

There are various ways you can get involved with *Learning to Live Together*.

Visit our website

On the ethics education for children website, you can read the latest news on how and where the programme is being implemented. You can also find updates about new translations and training events. Free electronic versions of the *Learning to Live Together* manual are ready to download.

Subscribe to the newsletter

A newsletter is sent periodically with updates on the latest workshops, training events, translations of the manual, etc. You can subscribe at the website (see back cover).

Start using the manual

Do you feel inspired by the *Learning to Live Together* programme and its approach to intercultural and interfaith learning? Explore with your colleagues and friends how you can implement it in your context. Feel free to contact Arigatou International to share and discuss your ideas.

Call for a training

If you feel your community, school, institution or network could benefit from training on how to use *Learning to Live Together*, you can contact Arigatou International for potential trainers who could assist you.

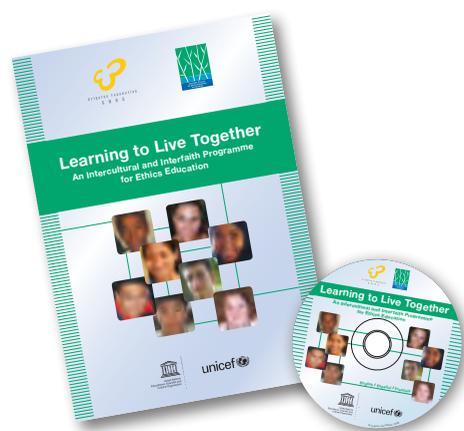
Register with the virtual Campus

As a facilitator and/or trainer, you have access to the web-based Campus, a learning community where you can share experiences and learn from others working with *Learning to Live Together*.

Promote the programme

Arigatou International is looking for long-term individual and institutional partners interested in promoting and implementing the *Learning to Live Together* programme within their institutions or networks.

If you are interested in any of these activities or in getting a print copy or a CD-ROM of the manual and related materials, please contact the Arigatou International Geneva office.





Arigatou International

About us

Arigatou International is an international faith-based NGO in special consultative status with ECOSOC that is committed to building a better world for children. An initiator and sustainer of partnership-based initiatives to secure child rights and foster children's well-being, Arigatou International seeks to maximize the potential of interfaith cooperation, and always strives to empower and involve children and youth.

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