
TOWARDS GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP



From Left: *Nirmala, Margarita, Cynthia, Sunita, Anu, Martine, Honorina, Hoa, Cecilia, Therese, Rosemary, Batilda, Cathy, Leena, Cecilia*

About the 66th UN DPI/NGO Conference

The UN DPI/NGO conference was held in Gyeongju, South Korea from May 30 to June 1, 2016. It was the first time this conference was held in Asia. The theme of the conference was “*Education for Global Citizenship: Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals Together*”. The main aim of the conference was to call attention on creating and strengthening global partnership in support of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The UN adopted this new development agenda, known as ‘Sustainable

Development Goals (SDG)’ in 2015, as successor to the Millennium Development Goals. These goals are not legally binding but are intergovernmental agreements. There are 17 goals and 169 targets covering a broad range of sustainable development issues. The focus of the conference was on Goal 4 : “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.” The purpose of the conference was to “*harness strategies, expertise and resources across the widest spectrum of civil society to unleash a range of education initiative that ensure inclusive, safe and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.*”

In the opening address the UN General Secretary, Ban Ki Moon, expressed his admiration for the NGOs. He gave a new interpretation to NGO - Networks of Global Opportunities and called them as vanguards of international action. The two and half day conference had four interactive roundtable discussions on topics: 1) The right to accessible, safe and inclusive learning spaces, 2) STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art and math) should power the SDGs, 3) Children and youth: tomorrow’s global citizens today, 4) Global citizens as stewards of the planet: energy, environment and climate change. There was also a special roundtable organized by the National Organizing Committee of Korea in which they shared the Saemaul Undong (SMU) experience in Korea and in other developing countries as means to poverty eradication and nation building. Besides the roundtables the program also included workshops and exhibitions organized by conference participants. Each of the discussions stressed on the importance of taking education as a nonnegotiable principle because education leads to peace; education is “today’s foundation for tomorrow’s prosperity”; education brings into being a culturally vibrant, economically strong and socially awakened community.

The host country South Korea was referred to as an example where high investment in education sector was paying back well. Known as the “miracle on the Han River” South Korea’s growth story is seen as



a remarkable one because in a very short time the country pulled itself out of poverty and has risen ahead of many other countries on the scale of social equality and educational egalitarianism.

The discussions recommended concrete actions for improving the quality of education. During the concluding session the conference adopted a global education action agenda, titled as The Gyeongju Action Plan, which provides concrete guidance for NGOs around the world to “enhance their ability to lobby governments to commitment to implementing the Sustainable Development Goals and mobilize NGOs in communities on the ground”. The conference also included the youth caucus, which was made up of the youth representing the different regions of the world, in order to gather their opinions on the pressing issues the world is dealing with. For contributing effectively to the realization of the SDGs they also introduced a formal youth declaration.

What did we do?

Besides attending the two and half day conference we, IBVM/CJ sisters and colleagues who participated the conference, met for four extra days - two days before the conference for preparation and two days after the conference for follow up. During the preparation days under the direction of Cecilia O’Dwyer IBVM, which began with a briefing on the UN and its function, we got ourselves familiar with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and analyzed the ‘Laudato Sii’ and the SDG connection. We also dealt with different themes related to the type of work done in our Provinces, in order to establish their connection with the SDGs. The topics discussed were, ‘Work among the grassroots’ (Cynthia CJ), ‘The value of community commitment in formal education’ (Nirmala IBVM), ‘Creating awareness through advocacy’ (Sunita CJ), ‘Takes on the Re-imagine Educational Conference-Mauritius - Preparing students for the 21st century’ (Cathy and Martine, IBVM colleagues).



The two days after the conference were dedicated to sharing new insights on Global Citizenship and drawing up a strategy for the dissemination of the knowledge gathered from the conference.

The discussions revolved around some of the questions we asked ourselves.**(a) How do we understand global citizenship?**

A global citizen avows an expanded identity, well beyond her individual, family, professional, local, national and regional identity. She will look beyond the national boundaries and accept diversities without discrimination, develop an unbiased and inclusive approach; cultivate meaningful partnerships and collaboration across the globe; nurture appreciation for cultural and racial diversity; be part of the global campaigns (for education and climate action, etc.); widen her vision about the world; and share personal resources and talents.

(b) As adults what kind of learning do we require for global citizenship?

Willingness to learn and unlearn is the key requirement for global citizenship. Educating oneself to be a global citizen would demand unlearning things in order to consider new ideas and change fixed ideas; acquiring communication skills; learning new languages and new skills; taking interest in reading more and keeping oneself updated on global issues. Education should encompass cognitional, emotional and spiritual learnings and should make people more empathetic towards others.

From the theological and spiritual perspective education should make people to be promoters of the power of love; people who are collaborators with God in caring for people in need and caring for the planet; people who respect other religious views and promote peace.

(c) The big ideas from the conference?

The purpose of the conference was to mobilize the civil society for achieving the SDGs. The main idea is to strive to establish a strong networking between national and local governments, activists, educators, policy makers, private sector and the youth in order to achieve the spirit of global citizenship, without leaving anyone behind. Promoting STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art and math) education for innovation and problem solving; defending the rights of the socially and culturally vulnerable; protecting the traditional values of the indigenous population and connecting formal and informal education were some of the emerging trends in global citizenship education.

(d) Things we could be doing differently or start doing ?

Looking for local sponsorship for quality education for rural children; creating partnership between sponsors and receivers; using rights based approach in education systems; promoting the use of social

media to raise awareness; being well informed on government schemes for people's rights; encouraging local authority and community partnership.

Action plan



According to UNESCO, global citizenship “*aims to empower learners to assume active roles to face and resolve global challenges and to become proactive contributors to a more peaceful, tolerant, inclusive and security world.*” Therefore we will “continue to work for the furtherance of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with a particular emphasis on promoting education for Global citizenship.” Each of us has decided on a personal action plan, apart from the group action plan we have undertaken. As an initial step to realizing this we would be willing to start with sharing the information on Global Citizenship and the SDGs in the provinces, in schools, to target groups and other stakeholders.

Please send the feedback to ibvmunngo@gmail.com

Do visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1AP1VdUHwPI>

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC_t9Od85uZAqfR8YGaPEQww

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