UNIVERSITY OF
KWAZULU-NATAL

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BUILDING A CULTURE OF NON-VIO LENCE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT THROUGH INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS

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Structure of the Presentation

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- Rationale and Motivation for the Initiative
- The Importance of Building a Culture of Nonviolence in ECD
- The Role of IKS in Building a Culture of Nonviolence in ECD
- The Ubuntu Philosophy and Principles in the Culture of Nonviolence
- The Road Map and Project Activities for the Initiative

Introduction

- The initiative to build and promote a culture of nonviolence in ECD through IKS is a collaboration between the DST/NRF IKS Centre of Excellence (UKZN); the Gandhi Development Trust (GDT) and New Beginnings.
- The initiative will be piloted in KwaZulu-Natal Province, where the three partner institutions are located.
- We would, however, like to invite the participation and support of different stakeholders, both the public and private sectors, including business and religious institutions, within and outside KZN.
- The culture of violence in its various forms and manifestations including murder, rape, armed robbery, burglary, bullying, hijacking, etc. affects everybody and every sector of society.

Therefore, the responsibility of building and promoting the culture of nonviolence in ECD is the responsibility of all.

- Practically more than two decades have passed since the end of the cold war. Generations of young people have been brought up and educated in this period but we continue to live in a world plagued by national, political, social, religious, ethnic intolerance and hatred.

- Millions of people, mostly women and children, have died, been crippled, left homeless or have become refugees by different forms of violence including terrorism.

- School grounds, which are supposed to be shrines of education, have now become dangerous battlegrounds.

- Over 500,000 children, some as young as 8 years of age, are participating in armed conflicts across the world, especially in Africa.

- There is one known human notion that murder is rooted in hatred and ignorance, and weapons are only its tools.

- The Rwanda genocide is a most vivid and horrible example of ethnic hatred that killed almost a million innocent human beings, using not a weapon, but an agricultural tool, the machete.

- It is well known that almost all armed conflicts in the world now occur within countries rather than between them. The current examples are in Syria, Somalia, Nigeria, DRC, Afghanistan, etc.

- These developments happen in the 21st century, when globalization trends and interdependence are becoming more and more pronounced.

- We still hear insane claims to supremacy and exclusivity, degrading remarks about peoples and nations;

- Strangely and disappointingly, this is done by "educated" people with all kinds of university degrees, as if they have never learned the lessons of history.

- Greed and hunger for power are trying to govern the world. What does all this mean? It means that we are failing in our educational efforts at all levels.

- Peace and non-violence education is the most neglected discipline in educational institutions.

The Importance of Building and Promoting a Culture of Nonviolence in ECD

- The preamble of the UNESCO constitution begins with the historic words: "since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that defences of peace must be constructed";

- The fundamental task for this initiative, therefore, is to find a way of transforming the culture of violence into a culture of nonviolence from the formative years of early childhood.

- This is based on the recognition that the values, spirit and practices of human tolerance, understanding, appreciation, trust and cooperation start to grow strong roots when cultivated and promoted from the early years of a child's social, cultural, skill and knowledge development.

- In the context of this initiative early childhood education refers to the education children receive before formal schooling, 0 to 6 years.

- Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) are community–based knowledge systems including skills, technologies, innovations, values and practices including spiritual, which members of a culturally specific community have developed and used for centuries for sustainable livelihood and social cohesion.

- Contrary to common views, IKS and modernity are not inconsistent in the promotion of the culture of nonviolence in ECD.

- Tradition and modernity have always co-existed and nurtured each other in every human culture for a peaceful and sustainable community livelihood. The values and practices of sharing, cooperation and tolerance emphasized in most traditional practices are not contradictory with modernity.

- Even some western leaders have expressed admiration for the "collective ascription cherished by traditional societies". Examples are found in Hilary Clinton's views in her book "It Takes a Village to Raise a Child".

- The use of IKS in promoting the culture of nonviolence in ECD is consistent with the African philosophy and principles of Ubuntu which emphasizes that the individual realizes her/his humanness through the well-being of others and the community as a whole.

- Ubuntu as an African philosophy of life also emphasizes the principles of equality and respect for human dignity, cultural diversity, sharing resources produced by the efforts of all, work by everyone and exploitation by none.

- It rejects a society built on exploitation and violence.

- Like in other African countries, South African households, communities and institutions including public and private business enterprises are plagued by the culture of violence in various forms and manifestations.

- The values and practices of violence are inculcated in children's lives from their early years of development.
- They experience violent practices and values in their homes, schools, neighbourhoods, play grounds, etc.
- Therefore, any initiative to develop and inspire the culture of peace and nonviolence must also begin from formative years using the rich indigenous knowledge and values emphasized in the philosophy and principles of *Ubuntu.*
- These values have been marginalized in the search for sustainable solutions to mitigate the culture of violence in schools, households and communities.
- They are embedded and expressed in cultural tools such as folklores, songs, proverbs, drama, indigenous games, religious and socio-economic practices, etc.
- They need to be identified, documented and shared through education.

Road Map for the Initiative

- Finalisation of the conceptual framework for the initiative.
- Identification of champions for the initiative to drive the process.
- Meeting of the champions and other stakeholders to create a common understanding and vision of the initiative.
- Development of initiative activities and programmes.
- Creation of a Steering Committee and sub-committees, from the champions, for the implementation of the activities of the initiative/project;
- Creating a database of partner institutions within and outside South Africa, cultural values and knowledge systems which promote the culture of nonviolence in ECD.
- Fundraising for initiative activities.
- Implementation of the initiative/project activities.

- Research in communities and institutions on IKS and Gandhian values and practices which emphasize the culture of nonviolence, citizenship, social cohesion, gender equity, nation building, environmental consciousness and Ubuntu.

- Participation in a survey of existing values and practices in ECD Centres on awareness of a culture of non-violence and human rights, Ubuntu and the Gandhian Satyagraha philosophies: identification of uniformity, challenges and prospects.

- Design, produce and distribute toolkits of IKS-based educational materials (traditional music, folklores, puzzles, indigenous games, images, toys, dances, etc.) that build and promote a culture of nonviolence including positive values and practices.

- Identification of champions, idols and best practices to drive the process.

- Provide necessary assistance to ECD practitioners and institutions to promote awareness of existing community and institutional based initiatives for building a culture of nonviolence using IKS, e.g. protection of IP, development of educational materials, curriculum, programme activities, etc.

- Develop educational/training programmes and materials for the champions of the initiative including ECD practitioners, child-minders and educators;

- Fundraising for the implementation of initiative activities.

- Training of trainers including the Champions, ECD practitioners, child-minders and educators on the use of the toolkits.

Thank You