

# Together for Peace (T4P)

## Webinar III: Living Well with Super Diversity

**Tuesday, 9 March 2021**

*The video recording of the Webinar is available [here](#).*

Building and sustaining positive peace in the Asia-Pacific requires a holistic approach to resolve and redress unjust structural social, political, cultural and economic factors to build stability, prosperity, harmony and progress. ‘Positive peace’ in this context is not just the absence of conflict, or ‘negative peace’ lacking durability, but the presence of justice and equality within and between societies.

On 30 and 31 March 2021, UNESCO Asia and the Pacific Regional Bureau for Education will host the ‘Together for Peace (T4P) Regional Dialogue on the role of education in building a peaceful and sustainable future in Asia-Pacific’. As a leadup to this event, a series of webinars has been organized to explore different dimensions of positive peace and solicit engagement from UNESCO National Commissions, development partners, education policymakers, teachers and school staff, and the general public.

The Living Well with Super Diversity webinar on 9 March 2021 discussed solutions and challenges to creating conditions through education for intercultural dialogue and Media and Information Literacy (MIL) as important prerequisites to build empathy and understanding across our diverse societies. This webinar focused on:

- Highlighting promising practices of education on cultural diversity and MIL as key tools for building and sustaining positive peace, and
- Engaging educators and education policymakers in dialogue for building positive peace through MIL and intercultural dialogue.

The webinar attracted approximately 191 participants from 36 countries.

### OPENING REMARKS

Mr. Shigeru Aoyagi, Director of UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education in Asia and the Pacific, welcomed participants and thanked panelists and speakers for supporting the T4P webinar. He mentioned that the Asia-Pacific is home to more than 4 billion people with diverse political mechanisms, cultural norms, media landscapes and educational systems, and in digital age, the spread of disinformation, misinformation and hate speech has been inciting people’s misunderstandings, confusion, discrimination and even violence. Stakeholders must stand together for the irreplaceable value of ensuring culture and heritage preservation and universal access, for embracing its diversity and universal values. Meanwhile, building citizen’s media literacy and digital skills, discernment regarding information, and intercultural communication should be reinforced in curricula and practices at all educational levels.

Dr. Javad Mottaghi, Secretary-General of the Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union, provided his remarks on the pluralistic society we are living in and the responsibility of media in it. In the current societies, individuals are more interconnected than ever before due to the rapid development of information technologies. The fast dissemination of information does not automatically contribute for better understanding and peace, but instead very often it spreads misinformation, hate speech, discrimination and violence. Journalists, reporters, producers and other media workers influence people’s behaviors, perceptions of the world and empathy. Through reporting on positive peace, they have the power to promote dialogue, reconciliation and sustainable development. “The key for the media to succeed is to keep distance from the logic of power and approach with a power of logic. Media professionals should be in favor of building bridges instead of walls,” Dr. Mottaghi said.

## KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Dr. Laura Yerekesheva from Al Farabi Kazakh National University, also as the Senior Research Fellow of the Centre for the Rapprochement of Cultures, UNESCO II Category, Kazakhstan addressed the webinar based on three topics: (1) the concept of peace transformation, (2) education and peace, and (3) good practices related to cultural diversity and literacy.

She explained that today peace is not just the absence of war, but also is understood in environmental, health, cultural and other developmental dimensions. It is the transformation from ‘demographic dividend’ to ‘peace dividend’, the change of focus from ‘material wellbeing only’ towards ‘human’s happiness’. Since the world is being in a hyper situation of cross-cultural encounters and interactions, education should continue its significance on instructing people learn to know, learn to live, and ultimately learn to live together. Some successful practices conducted in the Central Asian countries include the introduction of textbook for primary education on intercultural dialogue, tolerance and equity, history courses for higher education, capacity-building and skills development programmes, conferences, culture festivals and exhibitions, and individual activities on online platforms.

## PANEL DISCUSSION

The panel discussion highlighted a variety of good practices and modalities about building tolerance and learning to live together through intercultural dialogue, particularly focusing on using cultural heritage education to promote media and information literacy.

Mr. Kiichi Oyasu, Director of Asia-Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO (ACCU), Japan, spoke about the information and communication literacy for all stakeholders based on collective case studies on sustainable community development. He addressed the issue by first raising the question, what is literacy and what skills and competencies are needed for multi-stakeholders’ collaboration, especially in light of complex issues such as peace-building and SDGs? Due to diverse contexts, he added, it is impossible to develop a one-size-fits-all model. By providing examples of case studies conducted by ACCU in 2019 and 2020, Mr. Oyasu said in order to work together effectively, we need to balance power among stakeholders and all stakeholders need to learn from each other through continuous dialogues and collaboration. Lastly, all stakeholders, such as government, universities, NGOs, and communities, need information and

communication literacy and competencies to sustain innovations and expand the initiatives to other areas and stakeholders for mainstreaming.

Dr. Gül İnanç, is an expert on global cultural heritage education for conflict resolution, Lecturer of Nanyang Technological University, as well as the Co-Director at the Centre for Asia Pacific Refugee Studies of University of Auckland. Dr. İnanç highlighted that cultural heritage education complements the history education, and it's getting more important to include cultural heritage education in national curriculum. The Global Cultural Heritage Education is extremely essential not only for conflict resolution but also to avoid future conflicts. She referenced her own work with refugees and stated that both the tangible and intangible heritage play an important role in building identities, also helping the communities to come together. She mentioned that refugees who are now living in another country, should appreciate their own culture and be proud of the heritage they have, while adapting to the host community culture, to keep their heritage alive.

Ms. Bushra Ebadi, Co-founder of HILA Alliance, also the Youth Ambassador for the UNESCO Media and Information Literacy Alliance, shared her views of the connection between culture and media narratives, and the impact it has on peace between different communities. Referencing the destruction of the Buddha Statues at the UNESCO World Heritage site of the Bamiyan Valley in Afghanistan in 2001, Ms Ebadi said transformational changes can happen through media narratives, and we should often ask ourselves the question: 'Who is telling the story?' Women and other many marginalized communities are often excluded from both the digital and physical spaces, which also creates a space of violence in our community. On the other hand, media, narratives and culture can also play a role in fostering connection and empathy, and bringing people together to understand their shared histories, and the possibilities of coexistence, cooperating and collaborating to develop a peaceful and just future. What is important is the way how we take a global intersectional and intergenerational approach to peace, which means we should look at things across sectors and identities, and knowing that knowledge and heritage is transmitted between different generations.

Mr. Mehrdad Shabahang, Programme Specialist for the UNESCO Silk Roads Dialogue, introduced the background of the Silk Roads programme, and its objectives which are in line with the 2030 Agenda, especially SDG 16. In view of reinforcing 'sustainable peace and development', this programme seeks to reinforce intercultural dialogue, mutual understanding as well as respect social inclusion and cohesion in plural and multicultural modern societies, by building linkages and networks between different cultures and countries. Phase I of the programme aimed to highlight the cultural interactions between the people of Eurasia, while phase II seeks to raise awareness about the shared heritage and plural identity of people living along the Silk Roads. The programme is currently being implemented through three major initiatives including (1) Youth Empowering, (2) Building partnership and networking, and (3) Developing, mobilizing and disseminating knowledge. For more information about the photo contest, Youth Research Grant and The Silk Road Online Platform and other ongoing activities, please visit: <https://en.unesco.org/silkroad/>

Ms. Munzifa Babadjanova, Head of UNESCO Chair on Intercultural Dialogue in Modern World and Associate Professor of Culturology, Pedagogy, Psychology at Russian-Tajik (Slavic) University, introduced the concept for teaching disciplines in the cultural cycle, which takes into account that modern world culture, in particular the culture of modern Tajikistan, develops through the interaction of various local

and functional cultures. The UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity emphasizes that culture should be considered as the totality of the distinctive features inherent in a society or social group as it encompasses ‘the ability to live together’. Dr. Babadjanova also mentioned that through cognition of the cultures of other peoples, we reveal and explain how different peoples can and should live together and amicably, respect each other. It is necessary to start teaching cultural diversity through early education, because the knowledge and experiences we gained from childhood is a pledge for us to live in harmony with peoples from different cultures.

In conclusion, Dr. Sajida Haider Vandal, Vice-Chancellor of the Institute for Art and Culture, Pakistan, said the panel discussion had been an intense session and full of experiences and knowledge sharing. She summarized the main discussion points raised by the panelists, and reiterated that the community level intervention is important in terms of reaching out and creating a dialogue for people, that everybody can play a role using the media and information.

## WAY FORWARD

Perspectives for integrating media and information literacy and intercultural dialogue into education policies and plans were presented by Dr. Hyun Mook Lim, Director of UNESCO Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding, Ms. Duriya Amatavivat, former Deputy Permanent-Secretary for Education and former Secretary-General of Thai National Commission for UNESCO, and Ms. Chynara Bosunbaeva from National Commission of the Kyrgyz Republic for UNESCO.

Dr. Hyun Mook Lim analyzed the nature of misinformation, disinformation and hate speech, which are surging on the internet and social media nowadays, and are related to people’s fear of uncertainties and deprivation, as well as the dehumanization of other as inferior or dangerous. There should be consistent efforts to address the root causes of these harmful actions. Good practices of MIL education should not be exam-oriented, but focus on strengthening people’s ability of critical thinking and developing global citizenship. It is necessary to review the existing literacy education programmes, and to develop policy guides on reforming pedagogies in the Asia-Pacific region. Teaching materials for pre-school to upper secondary levels will instruct literacy educators to analyze the normalizations and justifications of hatred, discrimination and violence, and to share the experiences of dialogue and solidarity with their learners.

Ms. Duriya Amatavivat introduced the reform of Thailand's policy and core curriculum on digital transformation. In Thailand, the demands of MIL education mainly manifest in two aspects: citizen’s digital skills and cognitive abilities. In order to adapt to the digital age, Thailand 4.0 Policy places greater emphasis on eliminating illiteracy of digital competence, which enables more citizens to use digital technologies to solve scientific and mathematic problems, create digital contents and even live a better life. On the regulatory framework, Thailand has launched Open Government Data of Thailand and Personal Data Protection Act of 2019. These promote open access to public information and the protection of private information in terms of law. Meanwhile, the national curriculum provides learners with skills for communication, critical thinking and respect to cultural diversity, so that Thai people can co-exist in a more peaceful, tolerant, secure and sustainable society.

Ms. Chynara Bosunbaeva from the National Commission of Kyrgyz Republic for UNESCO presented the country's education policy. She stated that aligning with the Education for Sustainable Development Goals, the Kyrgyz Republic has involved information literacy in the State standards for general educational institutions. According to the national development strategy and the Development Programme, the quality of curriculum and teachers should be improved in order to create a multicultural and comfortable environment for children of different ethnicities. National programmes such as 'Digital Kyrgyzstan' and 'Smart School' use digital technologies and materials for school study and foster the ICT accessibility for all children. The Media Support Centre provides media literacy course for secondary education, which consists of theoretical and practical activities on MIL. In addition, National Commission of the Kyrgyz Republic for UNESCO, in partnership with governmental institutions, UNESCO Almaty Office and UNESCO ASPnet School, actively integrates MIL and intercultural dialogue into education policies projects and activities. Online curriculum for students and pedagogical guidelines for teacher's training on Education for Sustainable Development have been developed.

## CLOSING REMARKS

Ms. Krista Pikkat, Director of UNESCO Almaty and Representative to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, closed the webinar with appreciation to all the participants. She reiterated the importance of intercultural education as a prerequisite to build understanding across diverse societies, and to improve MIL and critical thinking skills among young people. In Central Asia, UNESCO promotes projects such as the capacity building and management of cultural heritage along the Silk Roads, and the regional online platform for youth to access to educational resources and interact under different cultural backgrounds. In summary, UNESCO believes the rich debates and experiences shared in this webinar will greatly contribute to the Regional Dialogue to be held on 30 and 31 March 2021, and will enlarge the dimensions on education in building a peaceful and sustainable future in Asia-Pacific.