



Common Ground: Multireligious Learning & Pluralism Initiative

AIM: Advancing pluralism and fostering civic empathy to create spaces where difference is celebrated, through the transformative power of multireligious learning and peacebuilding.

Preliminary Fieldwork & Research:

- Conducted nationwide Educator and Student Perceptions Survey to map pluralistic attitudes in classrooms across India
- Engaged 520 teachers across 26 schools and over 4,000 students through structured focus groups
- We found:
 - Teachers: 74% reported polarising attitudes and stereotypes affect daily student interactions;
 - Students: 83% reported hearing religious/caste-based slurs weekly, 48% had never communicated with children from other faiths, only 31% were willing to collaborate across cultures

Vertical 1 – Dialogue Labs:

- We have established 91 Dialogue Rooms in 4 states where students meet bi-monthly to practice and engage in active listening and constructive dialogue.
- They participate in structured workshops using paired readings and the Power of Two model where students invite somebody they disagree with on something fundamental and want to engage in further dialogue.
- We also encourage students to use the ‘steelmanning’ technique where they are encouraged to present the strongest possible argument for the side they disagree with.
- Our Dialogue Labs are committed to train students to recognise biases and combat groupthink.

- Post-lab surveys indicate that 70% of students demonstrated greater readiness to participate in intergroup and cross-cultural exchanges.

Vertical 2 – Peace Circles & Conflict De-Escalation:

- We established a community policing scheme called Peace Circles, which equips law enforcement officials with conflict de-escalation toolkits.
- We have currently trained 2000 police officers in conflict mediation through community engagement.
- Our civic taskforce has helped counter misinformation at 50+ religious events
- We also bring together community members, youth leaders, and the local police to facilitate dialogue and rebuild trust which has helped establish an early-warning system against conflict

Vertical 3 – Educators for Pluralism: Peace Labs and Curriculum

- Our curriculum, a product of colonial-era frameworks, neglects our own interreligious engagement.
- To combat this, we created Educator Labs which equip educators with evidence-based pedagogical tools to build tolerant classrooms by co-developing peace curricula
- Trained 3,000 educators to treat religious history as a model of learning by celebrating diverse philosophies and integrating storytelling into classroom practices
- Partnered with Seeds of Peace for a 3-day workshop for 60 educators which combined theory and experiential learning to develop peaceful classrooms
- We have also collaborated with Aawaaz Foundation during the UN World Interfaith Harmony Week, to train educators from 7 schools for a 4-day training on puppetry for interfaith storytelling, co-designing interfaith curricula, & curating a multi-religious reading kit for libraries
- Created first-of-its kind object-based curriculum which uses religious material culture and oral traditions as entry points into lived faiths. This has been piloted in 3 schools to integrate arts/crafts from local artisans to link interfaith learning with cultural heritage.

Vertical 4 – Youth Summit

- We hosted a youth pluralism summit in 2024 which had an attendance of 5010 students
- Hosted the Media for Peace Symposium gathers 200+ students annually for film screenings, dialogues, & intercultural exchanges. Students from 15 schools produced & screened 18 short films on stereotypes, misinformation, & coexistence.
- Post-event surveys showed 68% felt better equipped to recognize bias in media, & registration fees covered 57% of the symposium's costs, creating a sustainable model and a digital archive of youth-produced films for classroom use.

Vertical 5 – Reports

- Worked alongside an Ex-Member of Parliament to draft a report titled "The Secularism, Communal Harmony and Victim Compensation Act, 2024." Proposes a national legal framework ensuring equal compensation for victims of communal violence.
- Paper titled "Communicative cues and peaceful practices" accepted in the Journal of Language, Literature, Social, and Cultural Studies which analyses historical approaches to how verbal and non-verbal communication build trust and reduce interfaith conflict in India

Vertical 6 – Faith-Driven Community Engagement

- Cricket for Peace tournaments bring mixed-faith teams together to build friendships across divides.

Recognition:

1. Article in the Hindustan Times -
<https://www.hindustantimes.com/genesis/building-common-ground-how-one-initiative-is-teaching-in-dia-the-language-of-peace-101760612313057.html>
2. Winner - NGFP Young Voices Award, 2025 -
<https://www.teachthefuture.org/young-voices-network/ngfp-yv-awards-2025>

Collaborations & Partners

1. United Religions Initiative (San Francisco)
2. Seeds of Peace (New York City & India)
3. Agarwal Metalworks Pvt. Ltd (CSR Funding)
4. Aawaaz Education Services