**Interfaith Harmony Campaign 2020 in Sri Lanka**

**led by Ambassador of Peace Dr.W.A.Deshapriya S.Wijetunge**

**Inauguration of the Campaign:**

***WIFHW Campaign Actions- 2020 were initiated at “Mahatma Gandhi Non-violence Statue & Inter-religious Peace & Harmony Monument”, Lunawa , Moratuwa, Sri Lanka***



This is the one and only monument in Sri Lanka symbolizing 11 world major Religions and it focuses Interfaith Harmony, Peace & Non-violence. On Jan 26,2020 we had a multi-religious meditation and Dr.Dshapriya S. Wijetunge issued a video appeal to Sri Lankans to join hands with him for a noble cause of WIFHW actions in Sri Lanka. This message had been spreads to over 100 Buddhist, Christian, Hindu and Islam interfaith leaders and on that request they conducted various religious activities and blessings invoked in their religious places during the IFH Week by sharing the respective religious values among the followers of other faiths alike. Solely because of this unique initiative over 25000 people of various diverse faiths received the solemn message of WIFHW 2020.

**2.Inaugural Service Project for WIFHW.**

Then first service action of kindness was rendered by the interfaith harmony team which was gathered at Mahatma Gandhi Non-violence Statue & Inter-religious Peace & Harmony Monument” by visiting residential mentally handicapped center at Koralawella, Moratuwa on January 26th Morning 2020.(10.00AM-1.30PM). WIFHW team shared the message of World Interfaith Harmony Week. We presented them gifts, toys, hosted meals and sanitary commodities etc. They joined with various religious observances, orisons, hymns and songs of peace to symbolize that all of us are unified and made them feel happy. Children with disabilities are like butterflies with broken wings. They are just as beautiful as all others, but need just a bit of help to spread their wings. While practically and physically involving in every possible plan of action. Many effects have come out of these. So many children have been benefitted due to the WIFHW. Words have power. Kindness is the only language that blind can see and deaf can hear. They create. They change people. This center has been equipped with 45 inmates’ and10 staffs. Both inmates and staffs guided to have Interfaith prayers during the week of 1-7 Feb, 2020 for WIFHW. Our visiting team members were comprised of 22.

**3.WIFHW Committee Dialogue, lunch and fellowship;**

 After the inaugural service project of world interfaith harmony week, our team members consisting of 22 gathered for committee dialogue and fellowship at the invited host home of Mr.Meril Silva, St. Peter’s Road, Moratuwa on 26 Jan from 2.00 PM-5.30PM. Our organizing team was included SUNFO & Lions members

We discussed the fruitful outputs of inaugural service project as well as planning on furthering events up to 7th of Feb for WIFHW. Also, we discussed about the realistic values and the importance of WIFHW to be carried out in Sri Lanka specially focused to overcome the challenges, obstacles and setbacks arouse aftermath of Easter attack

**4.Religious action in Moratuwa:30 January 2020**

The ceremony was chaired by the Prime Minster of Sri Lanka Hon.Mahinda Rajapaksha and graced the occasion as the chief guest. Buddhist clergy and various other devotees participated including city mayor His Worship Saman Lal Fernando and respectable society leaders. Hon. Prime minister emphasized the issues relating to narcotics substances which destroy the younger generation and necessity of the religious leaders’ involvement and playing a pivotal role to overcome this challenge as well as to create inter-faith harmonious society. Notably over 800 participants attended this event. (9.00 am-01.30 pm).

5**. World Interfaith Harmony Week observance 7 February 2020 at Infant Jesus Church, Colombo 2**.

"Gratitude" was the theme of Interfaith Harmony Week of this year and based on the theme we with the representation of three platforms as SVM Sri Lanka Chapter + Gandhi Peace Foundation + International Youth Society observed the INFHW by participating in a Prayer and Meditation program yesterday, Slave Island, Colombo 2.

At this event we were mainly observed that all religions are fundamentally same & come from the same source And its teachings are same but only thing the way we worship and follow our religion is different. If we respect other religions & faiths then we will respect by ourselves as well as others .

It was also prayed to save the world from the Corona Virus that is now threatening the world and to cure all those who suffering & battling to survive.

Event participants Jerome de Silva led SUNFO Youth, Women volunteers.

6**. Essay competition and Interfaith Harmony Dialogue**

An essay competition on the topic of “ Caring Elders with Love” conducted among schools and Community in Kopai Education Division .A programme at Saiva Tamil Viddayalaya,Urumpirali on 25-01-2020 Coordinated by Lion.C.Rajendran. Students spooked about their views of WIFHW About 100 students and teachers participated.

7.**Awareness programme of Peace & Interfaith Harmony**

This programe was held at Saviva Tamil College , Urumpirali on 5 -2-2020 for senior citizens. About 150 participated for programme activities,

**8. Walk for meeting of older generation by young students**

The selected students from 5 schools visited the older persons /senior citizens in Urumpilal Village in Jaffna on 27 Feb 2020 with the message of peace & love for WIFHW.

**9. WIFHW –Sports Festival**

Peace & Harmony Sports Festival was held at Urumpiral Hindu College Kopai on 7-2-2020

**10.WIFHW Main Commemoration Programme Jaffna District (Kopay)**

After two weeks different activities in 20 schools, community centers and villages in Kopay, Jaffna” for WIFHW final conclusion ceremony was held at the Auditorium of Urumpiral Hindu College. Kopay on Feb 7 afternoon 2.00PM onwards. Multi religious leaders were invited to address the gathering. Appreciations presented for “Keep Senior Citizens Happy” Essay competition and activity writers. Society Leaders, Lions, School Principals and Youth cooperated and gathered for the event addressed by SUNFO Global President Dr.M.Reginolld. Over 1000 students, seniors, teachers, officials and parents participated WIFHW activities in Jaffna –Kopay during the period of 25 Jan to 7 Feb, 2020. Media & News Papers covered the event widely.

**11. WIFHW Action aftermath of Easter attack**

On 21st April 2019 3 Churches and 3 hotels were exploded by suicide bombers and affected interfaith harmony processes. We organized 1st month remembrance event at the Mahatma Gandhi Non-violence Statue & Inter-religious Peace & Harmony Monument”, Lunawa , Moratuwa, Sri Lanka on 22nd May 2019 with the participation of family members of victims and multi-religious leaders. Thereby 3rd month remembrance also were organized at the Lion’s center Battaramulla on 29th July 2019. As a continuation of WIFHW, our representatives led by Mr. Clerance Mendis visited homes of victims throughout island-wide and expressed their condolences, shared the grievances and provided livelihood assistance.

**12. WIFHW Commemorated in Kandy**

"UN declared World Interfaith Harmony Week 10th Anniversary+ SDG Goal 16" Conclude message delivered by the Key note theme Speaker Chief Honarary Guest Dr.Sir Deshariya S. Wijetunge (Director General-SUNFO) at the
ceremony of Intellectual Professors and Researchers from 40 Universities in Sri Lanka and overseas led by Dr.J.Balachandar (Founder Chairman -ESN). Conference & Award Ceremony was held at Hotel Topaz Kandy on 7 February,2020 followed by Gala Dinner with cultural performances from Sri Lanka and overseas.Event had wide media coverage from ITN, Rupavaini, Kandurata Radio etc, Honorary Guest Hon.G.T.Rajapaksha delivered the message of His Excellency .Mahinda Rajapaksha PM & Government of Sri Lanka. Appreciate the organizers SUNFO Project Director K.Janaka SFSUNFO & family, SDG Governor Jeewanashuree Mangalika Rajasekera & team, Central & Sabaragamuwa Provinces SUNFO Youth Coordinator Rashida Yoosuf Ali SFSUNFO -family and team, Green Lion SDG Partners Team, SDGYNSL Youth Leader Muhammed Rimas and all who worked hard to organize the event.

13.Gangaramaya Religious Festival in Colombo-Feb 6 &7

Over 20,000 persons participated two days event of “Gangaramaya “Parade on 6-7 February in the city of Colombo. Special blessings were placed for effected people of Corona Virus through out the world. Drummer. Dancers and 50 elephants joined this procession chanting religious blessings. President Gotabaya Rajapaksa places the casket containing the Sacred Buddha relics on the tusker at the Gangarama Temple, Colombo. Speaker of the Parliament /SUNFO Patron Deshabandu Karu Jayasuriya, Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksha and several Key leaders of Sri Lanka too participated the events.

**14:Multi-Religious Ceremonies by Commercial Bank of Ceylon.-WIFHW**

During the WIFHW four religious ceremonies organized by Commercial Bank of Ceylon with the participation of over 1000 in Colombo (Buddhist, Islam, Christian & ,Hindu)

**15. IFHW Dialogue at Chavakachcheri SDG Youth Council**

Are youth dialogue held at Chavakachcheri and hindu youth visited a Buddhist Monk for IFHW message on 02-02-2020

 **WORLD INTERFAITH HARMONY WEEK MESSEGE**

WIFHW was established with the honorable intentions for a positive outcome. Aftermath of Easter attack, WIFHW functions to interconnect various diverse religions, races and ethnicities in order to promote peace, harmony and co-existence within the Sri Lankan communities.

We can’t find solutions, without treating a problem as a problem. We need to unify as a community, and as a country to promote reconciliation. The dead didn’t come back to life, the grief didn’t disappear. The despair is still omnipotent. The scars haven’t healed either. Our economy is still a mess. Our industries are suffering. Our society is still in suspicion. And our nation is reeling.

When we are at rock bottom as a nation, the only way is up. We need to start rebuilding, rethinking and re-strategizing. We need to change what was, to change what should be. Let’s learn and reflect from the bitter past to ensure that every citizen has a better future to live peacefully in Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka was a country defined by its multiculturalism and co-existence, became one defined by chaos and division. The crisis may probably be over, but it has taught lessons beyond words; an experience beyond a lifetime. Let us recall the words of wisdom!

 01. Racism has no race.

 What originated as a personal problem became a racial crisis thanks to namesake followers of religions. If Lord Buddha, Prophet Muhammadh or Jesus Christ were alive, we are pretty sure that they would have been ashamed to see the actions of most of these mongrels.

02. Love has no borders. Friends are divine.

We should stand together as friends shoulder to shoulder and heart to heart in the name of humanity. Love, trust and acceptance should be our common vision to promote interfaith harmony.

03. Talk is easy. The walk is harder

So many times, in so many crises, beloved social media warriors do nothing but post. Having been in the crisis zone as a country, it was evident that walking the talk is not easy as it sounds. Humanity engulfed even the toughest of souls.

04. Religions preach unity; not division.

It wasn’t easy. It was very difficult to get people’s mentality sorted out. Everyone looked at everyone as suspects. The society made it that way. But, in the end, what prevailed was the true teachings of the religions; compassion of Buddhism, unity of Hindus, charity of Christians and brotherhood of Muslims. At the end of the day, there were only two races: One which loved this nation, and the other which wanted chaos.

05. Communications matters.

What was the size of a grain was magnified to the size of a pumpkin. Do not share your incited and emotional outbreaks in social media in a way that will fuel more. Your words and your deeds Things will soon fall into place. You won’t be able to take your words back. Be constructive and efficient in your social media usage. That’s where most racism is fueled. Use it to explain the world what the real cause is. Associate with diverse people to create a human bond.

06. People forget too quickly.

It wasn’t long ago that nature had its kill in our country. Floods took so many lives and property. In those times, every race and religion forgot their identity, only to replace it with Sri Lankan identity. The country slowly rose up. Fast forward to this day and the entire country seems to be in a state of amnesia. Forgetting is okay, but failing to even recognize is a crime.

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