

Janakaraliya

Evaluation at the Location
Hambanthota
2007

by Viewers

Evaluation of Janakaraliya / Future Peace Work – Hambantota 2007

Background

Janakaraliya and Future Peace decided to join hands and work together in the Hambantota district during the period of February – May 2007. The main objective was to build on each others expertise and experience and to have a wider and more effective impact in the area. It was also envisaged that this cooperation would serve as a pilot and a role model on how future collaborations in the field of peace building can take place.

During the course of these 3 months the following activities took place within the tent and in the surrounding areas.

Theatre productions, film festivals, school programmes for teachers, children and community groups, training of FP group to develop 2 plays, publicity work, 'paduru party, expression of ideas, opportunities for local groups to showcase their talent.

Team feedback

The team from Janakaraliya and Future Peace reflected briefly on their cooperation and on some of their achievements. It was commonly felt that they had been able to reach a broader and wider audience through the sharing of work and having a bigger group to work with. They also expressed that they had got to know a little bit more about a new topic (ie dramas (FP), Films (TOP)).

In order to improve on their work and to make the initiative more effective the group was asked to list down aspects in which they 'failed' or were below their expectations. Many views were shared and can be categorised under the following themes

1. Unable or limited in their capacity to attract the public for their activities as well to develop a discourse around selected themes. This also included aspects such as difficulties in communication.
2. Although cooperation between the two teams was an envisaged objective it was also stated that they had limited opportunities for common activities and for sharing experiences. There were also comments on lack of understanding between the groups and that there were no structure or assistance to deal with contentious issues that arose between the teams or individuals.
3. Time management was another issue that was highlighted which included aspects such as the not making optimum use of time available, over scheduling, tiredness etc.
4. Reaching out to the minority communities were inadequate. Tamil plays did not attract much participation. There was also very limited engagement with the Tamil community. There was also disappointment that both plays developed by Future Peace were in Sinhalese.

In addition to these points there were also problems related to water, toilet facilities and the general accessibility of the location.

Once these aspects were categorised and selected 4 groups were formed and each group was asked to generate a list of solutions for these 4 issues. The group work was then shared with the larger group and further discussions and clarifications took place. (refer to documentation of group work)

It was also decided that further discussions would take place with the Janakaraliya team on issues of communication, and management.

Public Evaluation.

Around 50 persons who had been involved in various activities participated. This included officers from the education department, religious leaders, NGO staff as well as general public. The group was divided in to three and were asked to discuss the following questions.

1. What did you or your community gain as a result of Janakaraliya?
2. How can this type of activity be further improved?
3. What can you do/ contribute towards taking forward these activities in the Hambantota district?

1. Most comments reflected that this had given them / the public an opportunity for high quality, decent

entertainment, opportunity for reflection, space and appreciation for local artists, methods for joyful learning, improving presentation skills, attraction for theatre and an example to the overall community on co-existence and cooperation. There was deep appreciation for the time, and commitment of the cast.

- A challenge that was posed to the group was on how local youth who are talented could join this group. It was stated that if they are not taken on board then the initiative is not sustained.
2. In order to improve the activities some of the suggestions included spending longer time in some areas, designing smaller tents that can be easily taken around, making arrangements for transport from remote areas. There was also the recommendation that there should be more prior planning to ensure that more key persons in the area are aware and involved in the work. There was also a suggestion that there should be tickets and that they should also be priced according to the quality of the product and not just on affordability.

Charandas is a very powerful play. It has many messages and inspires the audience to re-examine values and social ethics. My daughter is a very shy person who does not usually speak in front of people. After the play I was amazed to see her get up and speak to the audience on her impressions of the play. After this experience she has become a different girl and now is begging to come and see Charandas for the 3rd time tomorrow! ”

Evaluation participant.

This same person also spontaneously sang a sonnet she had composed to honour and thank the cast for their activities in Hambantota

3. Before this presentation was made the audience was told that the tent has already been to 4 locations, had similar activities but that unfortunately there has been no continuation of the activities. In some instances even committees had been formed but they have proved to be inactive. Most of the suggestions revolved around the setting up of various committees and having the community involved and sharing in the costs¹.

Most people say that youth are the future of the country but they only talk and don't do anything concrete about it. In our own way we would like to be involved. Even though we wanted to take part in the State Drama Festival our application was rejected. There is nobody to help us or show us how we can improve. We are from the school not far from this tent. We beg you to not just speak about supporting youth but to come and really help us.

Year 11 student of Hambantota Vidyalaya

¹ The question of how to sustain the work begun needs to be examined and discussed in depth.