

## **Youth Encounter – 2009**

AREDS joining hands with DCLI (Development et Civilization Lebret Irfed) organized a six-day workshop at Karur, in which youth from various countries met face to face and discussed the problems and issues that the youth face today. The workshop helped them explore themselves and create a coalition for addressing the problems of youth at international level.

### **Youth involvement in community-building today and the relevance of non-violence**

In the face of today's global challenges, financial, economic and climate crises, social and cultural tensions, young people were called upon – and they demand – to take part in reflecting upon and contributing to alternative policies and solutions that urgently need to be put in place.

This initiative of an international youth encounter workshop in India (Tamil Nadu) from May 20-25, 2009 was the occasion for some 30 socially active young leaders, aged between 20 and 30 years, representing various organizations and social, cultural and religious backgrounds, to come together, exchange experiences and tackle from their own point of view the issues and problems that concern young people today. It further aimed to develop young people's capacity to build alternatives and solutions, reinforce links and develop common tools, initiatives and solidarity actions.

While the majority of participants came from Asia, other continents were also represented to enrich the discussions and set the way for similar initiatives planned by the DCLI network in other regions (Africa, Middle East, Latin America, and Europe).

### **Youth Declaration**

Youth members from Asia, Africa, Latin America and Europe and from various cultures and beliefs have assembled at the International Youth Encounter (Karur, India, May 20-25, 2009) to discuss the role of the youth in contemporary crisis. We arrived at a common vision of promoting a world where human dignity is in the centre of every action; we further declare that:

- We are aware of the exploitative and oppressive, cultural, social, political, economic and environmental situations that our planet as a whole is facing today;
- We recognize that our elders throughout history have set forward paths. The good ones have been forgotten and lessons from the bad ones have not been learnt due to the replication of ideas that maintain inequalities through a system based on power, oppression and social stratification. This encourages groups of people to dominate over others;
- We believe that the roots of this system have reproduced themselves throughout generations; evolving under different models and excluding the majority of human beings including youth by depriving them of basic human rights, justice, and access to education, livelihood, natural resources and gender equalities.

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- We are convinced and we reaffirm that humanity has come to a turning point and new directions need to be taken;
- We believe that we cannot escape the past and replicate the same mistakes. Hence, new chapters need to be written based on a new consciousness that is emerging all around the world.

For these reasons, we the youth, decide that:

- We will develop concrete actions in order to unite all youth under a shared common vision based on the recognition of human dignity, gender equality, minority-ethnic and cultural rights and also the right to have a decent life (employment, education, health, etc.) based on mutual concerns, sharing, respect and reciprocity;
- We will promote and establish alliances to build collective and conscious numbers in order to strengthen our capacity and voices.
- We will pressurize governments, institutions, political parties, international, national and local organizations, movements to take concrete actions and be accountable for the realization of this common vision;
- We will seek new pedagogical approaches that encourage conscious and critical development of children, youth, adults and humanity as a whole;
- We will act towards sustainable living, especially in respect of environment, rooted in traditional wisdom, local experiences and innovations. These models will be based on the total awareness that we are interrelated; four legged people, two legged people, plant people, water people, air people, mineral people, etc;
- We will defend and uphold the right to self determination of all nationalities, cultures and communities;
- We share our experiences and vision with everyone marching into the future for the attainment of our common collective goals.