



Society for Intercultural Education, Training and Research

Delhi Chapter Learning Event Summary

May 22, 2015 at the New Delhi AFS office of Intercultural Programs

The Sietar Delhi Learning Event on 22nd May 2015 brought together a wonderful group of enthusiastic participants as we discussed Intercultural Learning in India and abroad.

Hosted in the warm New Delhi office of AFS Intercultural Programs, Esha Lall from AFS introduced us to the topic: ***Experiencing a new country and learning to live together.***

She took us through the basic idea of the program they conducted which aimed to help exchange students reflect on their experiences and to help volunteers, host families and teachers to better understand their exchange students better, to empathize with them, and be better counsellors, and also tied in to how we as interculturalists, can provide more meaningful learning and cultural opportunities for the present and future students.

We then broke out into groups to discuss the importance of the four concepts discussed in the presentation, viz. Language & Communication, Religious Beliefs, Time and Relationships, and offer suggestions we may have while experiencing a new culture.

As I moderated the discussion, it was interesting to see the topics being discussed from different points of view; with each participant bringing their unique perspective.

We saw how we can communicate without knowing a language and that often even though we speak the same language, we may be not be communicating effectively!

There was much debate on the topic of religion and how it is expressed by different cultures. However, what definitely came through was the need to show respect and that the basic guidelines for humanity and the instinct to be good was common across cultures.

We took our time to discuss the concept of Time, which seems clearly defined in the West, but where one time period rolls into the other in the East. Surely, we spent more than the allocated "five minutes" to discuss this, but then again, we are in the East!

The topic of relationships took us through discussion various relationships such as those between parents and children, family, friends and colleagues; and the kind of freedom experienced in different cultures at different ages.

Overall, we learnt that keeping an open mind and wanting to learn and adapt were important no matter what parameter was a chosen and this would surely help in any kind of cultural exchange.

We closed the day bidding farewell to Line as she leaves Delhi and thanking her for her wonderful work with the Chapter. I was honoured to be handed the baton to take over as the new head of the New Delhi Chapter and am looking forward to organizing and attending many more learning events, meeting wonderful people and new experiences.

- Renu Ramakrishnan, New Delhi, Chapter Head