



Wisdom about Cooperation from the Children

Story by Despina Namwembe
Lesson Idea by Sally Mahé

Introduction: Our Interfaith Youth Partnership CC made a spiritual appreciation visit to the Hare Krishna temple in Kampala, Uganda. Joy, Paul, Hannington, Sylvia and I were part of the service from the beginning to the end. We also shared a meal with the Hare Krishna believers.

The Hare Krishna spiritual leader (or servant, as he always wants to be referred to) gave a very moving talk. He shared with us amazing words of wisdom by the Hare Krishna kids about *Cooperation*.

In all this I kept thinking about URI Cooperation Circles and how these words can help us in the work we do as members of the different CCs around the world.

About Cooperation:

The kids said that when we cooperate:

- a) We become peaceful - This is a spirit of give and take and togetherness in the process. When this is realized, there is peace.
- b) We become polite - there is respect for one another as a result of cooperation. There is fear of stepping on each others feet. We consider other people when making decisions, plans, etc...
- c) We intend to share work equally - cooperation means that we all become servants to each other and not necessarily masters, sharing our strengths and weaknesses, our skills and inequalities and our problems and troubles.
- d) We participate in teamwork - we all work hard to achieve success and when it comes, it's not for one individual but for the entire team. Cooperation and working towards it makes us achieve more and share everything however bad or good.
- e) We learn how to behave through cooperation - meaning that when we cooperate, we are aware of others in society, their needs as well as demands, their weaknesses and strengths and we work hard not to dominate but rather to share.
- f) Cooperation makes us make friends instead of enemies - how can you decide to make a permanent enemy of someone you are willing to cooperate with? It is hard. Therefore the more we cooperate, the friendlier and peaceful we become.
- g) Cooperation makes us take care for each other - we no longer think of ourselves as individuals but rather our brothers and sisters (near and far) who are in the same web of cooperation. We realize that we should no longer work for just for ourselves only - but move further so our positive actions impacts others - which then becomes fun.
- h) Student: "What if you want to cooperate and the other person decides not to?"

Spiritual Teacher: "Don't think about those not cooperating but rather think about God. Remember spiritual leaders of the early days including Jesus, they were surrounded by people who doubted them, resisted them but they did their missionary work and they later left a legacy behind. Uncooperative members can be left to God so long as we continue to do what is right God can take care of them. We are only called to do our part."

Gratitude from Despina:

"The above were such inspiring words and I was also amazed at how the children were so insightful and knowledgeable at such a tender age. With gratitude to Lavanga Das, Shukula Mukesh, and members of the Interfaith Youth Partnership CC who made this visit."

-Despina Namwembe, Regional Coordinator, Great Lakes Sub-region, Africa

Using These Ideas:

As URI Cooperation Circle members, there may be occasions to help people from different backgrounds go deeper into understanding the value of cooperation and how practically to live these values, especially among people who bring diverse perspectives.

Please create your own ideas for how to use these inspiring words by the children. Here a few starter ideas:

1. Dialogue - Go round the circle and ask each person to read sentences a – h. Ask each person to reflect and then choose one that touches them. Ask the group to say more about this idea and why the idea they chose is especially meaningful to them.
2. Sharing Stories – After reading through the list – ask the group to reflect on their life experiences and remember an experience they were involved in where one of these ideas made a difference. Ask each person to share their experiences and stories.
3. Creative Fun - To give the group more practical knowledge of each idea, invite smaller groups (of three or four) to create a skit, or a newscast, or a 'human sculpture' – that expresses their idea. Ask them present their "creations" to each other and reflect.
4. Cooperation in Action – after reading and discussing these ideas, ask group to keep this list handy until the next gathering. Invite them to make notes for themselves about times when they actually were living and practicing some of these ideas. These real-life experiences can be discussed at the next meeting.
5. Ask the Children – The group might decide to explore cooperation with children they know. Simple questions like: What are words you think of when you hear Cooperation? What do you like about Cooperation? Or, ask children to help you finish these sentences...
Cooperation makes me... Cooperation helps people... I cooperate when I...