# MIND-HEART DIALOGUE REGIONAL TRAINING OF TRAINERS SOUTH ASIA REGION

Kathmandu, Nepal

27<sup>th</sup> November – 1<sup>st</sup> December 2023

LEARNINGS – SUMMARY REPORT



Group photo of participants with Deputy Regional Director UNICEF South Asia & Trainers

#### **Abbreviations**

CORAT Africa – Christian Organizations Research and Advisory Trust of Africa

CSO /CSOs - Civil Society Organisations/s

**DRR** - Disaster Risk Reduction

FBO/FBOs - Faith Based Organisation/s

FL / FLs - Faith Leader/s

FPCC - Faith and Positive Change for Children, Families and Communities

JLI - Joint Learning Initiative on Faith & Local Communities

JOC - Journey of Change

MFACC's - Multi-Faith Action Coordination Committees

MHD - Mind Heart Dialogue

PHC - Public Health Care

RAG - Regional Advisory Group

RfP - Religions for Peace

ROSA - Regional Office for South Asia (Unicef)

SAR - South Asia Region/ South Asian Region

SBC - Social Behaviour Change / Social & Behavioural Change

SIHL - Sarvodaya Institute of Higher Learning

ToT/TOT – Training of Trainers

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# 1. Background: Faith for Positive Change for Children, Families and Communities (FPCC), and the Road to Kathmandu

Faith for Positive Change for Children, Families and Communities (FPCC) is a joint initiative of a global partnership between UNICEF, Religions for Peace (RfP), and Joint Learning Initiative on Faith & Local Communities (JLI). FPCC was first conceived by UNICEF's Communication for Development (C4D) in 2018, to drive UNICEF beyond single-sector, and small-scale cum ad-hoc approaches of faith engagement in development work. FPCC is based on the recognition that faith groups possess a mandate to protect and empower children, families and communities; and that development organizations and faith-based organizations (FBOs) need to work together as equal partners to facilitate transformation in their communities

#### The FPCC initiative is a result of;

- UNICEF's 2014 mapping of its approach to working with faith actors across 150 countries.
- UNICEF's C4D Global Theory for Social and Behaviour Change.
- JLI's Theory of Change for faith group and community mobilization.
- A one-day consultation on the Theory of Change with JLI partners representing different faiths including practitioners and pracademics, from 13 different institutions.
- FPCC's in-depth review of faith-based approaches and resources, including a literature and evidence review on faith for social and behaviour change.
- A global consultation workshop with over 100 faith leaders, faith-based organizations, government representatives and UNICEF officers from 20 countries across all regions and faiths.
- Seventeen case studies of UNICEF work with FBOs, mapping and content review of over 45 faith-based resources.

(Source: Mind-Heart Dialogue: Facilitators' Guide for Faith Engagement (Volume 2), 2023)

One of the key achievements of the FPCC has been the development and application of the Mind-Hear Dialogue (MHD) Approach. This approach invites the individual to draw from their experience and reflections on a particular issue and relate that to present any challenges facing children. The approach utilizes social behaviour change approaches to analyze social, cultural and religious norms and practices, and compare these with the recommended scientific and technical information to reinforce positive norms and practices for the wellbeing of children, families and communities.

In 2019, this approach was piloted in five countries across Eastern, Southern, Western, and Central Africa, through a series of "work rocks", and the learnings were documented leading to a draft toolkit. In 2020-21, during the Covid-19 pandemic, six virtual Mind-Heart Dialogue sessions were done to support faith leaders, FBOs, and UNICEF to support and safeguard vulnerable groups in Eastern and Southern Africa. Between 2021-2022, teams from Kenya, Malawi, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Uganda, Zambia, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Zimbabwe and Ghana, underwent comprehensive four-day residential training on Mind-Heard Dialogue approach, conducted by CORAT Africa.

The trained facilitators from the aforementioned countries, conducted at least two MHD sessions (one to three days sessions) in a variety of spaces, in their respective countries. Following this, those facilitators took part in virtual mentorship sessions by which they were able to bring evidence and experiences which led to the review and update of the first MHD Facilitators' Guide.

#### The Road to Kathmandu

The idea to conduct a regional training on the Mind-Heart-Dialogue (MHD) in the South Asian Region had been in discussion at least since early 2021. In May 2022, at the regional faith engagement forum (Kathmandu, Nepal), the regional faith engagement strategy and road map for South Asia was developed. In October 2022, the Regional Advisory Group (RAG) for South Asia was convened virtually, and it was followed by a RAG Workshop on Faith Actors for Child Rights and Well-being, held in Colombo (Sri Lanka) between 13<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> August 2023.

Initially it was suggested that the Regional MHD Training of Trainers (TOT) for South Asia be limited to 05 selected countries in the region. However, at the Regional Advisory Group (RAG) Workshop held in Colombo between 13<sup>th</sup> & 15<sup>th</sup> August 2023, it was proposed to extend the regional MHD training to all 8 countries in South Asia.

As a result of the aforementioned, a Regional Training of Trainers (TOT) on Mind-Heart-Dialogue for South Asia was planned to be held at UNICEF ROSA, Kathmandu, between 27<sup>th</sup> November and 1<sup>st</sup> December 2023. 34 trainers / facilitators representing 8 countries and various faith-based-organizations (FBOs), civil society organizations (CSO), and UNICEF were selected to be a part of the regional MHD TOT. Out of the 34 selected trainers/ facilitators, 32 participated in-person at this regional training.

Training was facilitated by 03 Master Trainers / Facilitators of Sarvodaya Institute of Higher Learning (SIHL), of the Sarvodaya Movement (Sri Lanka). Members of UNICEF ROSA, and the Joint Learning Initiative on Faith & Local Communities (JLI) also contributed in facilitation of the TOT.

## 2. Methodology of Facilitation of the Regional TOT

Facilitation of the ToT was conducted by a team of three (03) trainers of the Sarvodaya Institute of Higher Learning (SIHL) of the Sarvodaya Movement (Sri Lanka). The team included a Lead Master Trainer, Assisting Master Trainer, and MEL Focal Point. The team led by the Lead Master Trainer utilized adult learning techniques with a participatory approach for facilitation, and delivered the TOT co-facilitating as a team.

The TOT included sessions introducing key themes and facts, group activities, collective and individual reflections, spiritual reflections, and MHD activities as per the Facilitators' Guide (2022).

## The key objectives of the TOT were;

- Introduce the MHD to the Regional Trainers / Country Facilitators as the first-step of cascading the implementation of the MHD in countries of South Asia
- Familiarize Regional Trainers / Country Facilitators with tools and techniques outlined in the MHD Facilitators' Guide
- Enhance the Facilitation Skills of the Regional Trainers / Country Facilitators
- Collectively Explore the Avenues by which the MHD can be incorporated into the work implemented by FBOs, CSOs and UNICEF in the respective home countries, especially in relation to the rights and well-being of adolescent girls
- Facilitation of the enhancement and incorporation of the MHD Regional MEAL Framework at country level

Furthermore, the sessions were aligned across key thematic areas as given below:

Day 1 - Exploring Life - Faith & Childhood

Day 2 – Mind Heart Dialogue for a New Reality for Children

Day 3 – Championing Mind Heart Dialogue

**Day 4 – Training Practice** 

#### Day 5 – The Way Forward

At the commencement of the TOT participants collectively developed "safe space guidelines for the TOT":

	Respect & Open-mindedness	Mindful Language
	Confidentiality	Creating a Supportive Environment
	Cultural Sensitivity	Open Communication
	Constructive Feedback	Safe Physical Environment
П	Active Participation	

#### 3. Methodology for Monitoring and Capturing the Learnings of the TOT

Monitoring and Capturing the Learnings of the TOT was executed through semi-structured surveys, and capturing of the learnings emanating from discussions and activities by the MEL Focal Point and the other two trainers.

**Pre-Workshop Survey**: A self-administered semi-structured survey, shared with participants ahead of the commencement of the workshop as a Google form. The purpose of this tool was to: (a) understand the background of the participants (i.e. type of organization and work they are involved in); (b) their motivation to become a MHD Facilitator; (c) their expectations on the MHD TOT and suggestions for participatory engagement methodologies for TOT; and, (d) their understanding on the role of faith in social development. 24 out of 32 participants responded to this survey. (Response rate = 75%)

**Mid-Workshop Review:** This was a self-administered semi-structured survey conducted on the 3rd day of the TOT utilizing the mentimeter platform. The purpose of this tool was to: (a) monitor the confidence among participants regarding their understanding of the MHD; (b) the topics/ themes of the training that they found most interesting up to the 3rd Day; and, (c) the ways in which they have come to reflect about faith and its role in their work. All 32 participants responded to this survey. (Response rate = 100%)

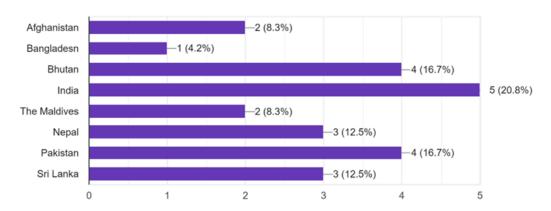
**Post-Workshop Survey:** A self-administered semi-structured survey, shared with participants as a Google form at the end of the final session on the 5<sup>th</sup> day (final day) of the ToT. Given the return flight schedules of some participants, all participants were given time up-to 5 days after the final session to complete this survey.

The key purpose of this tool was to assess and understand the immediate outcomes (i.e. outputs) of the ToT in terms of: (a)how they found the overall T0T; (b) sessions they found to be most useful/engaging for themselves; (c) their change of perception regarding the role of faith in protection and empowerment of children, families and communities; (d) their comfort level in facilitating MHD in their home countries and communities; (e) their level of satisfaction regarding the facilitation of the ToT by the facilitators; and (f) their suggestions regarding the MHD approach & the Facilitators' Guide. 21 out of 32 participants responded to this survey. (Response rate = 65.63%)

# 4. Understanding the Background, Expectations and Perspectives of the Participants (Pre-Workshop Survey)

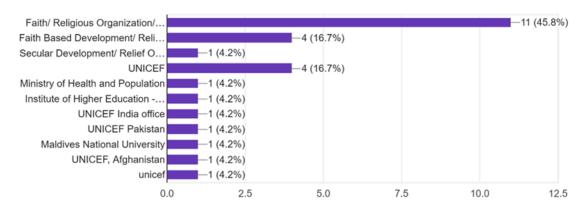
Participants included those who belong to religious and faith communities, some with an active role of a religious leader – belonging to either a Dharmic Religion (Buddhism/ Hinduism) or an Abrahamic Religion (Islam / Christianity), reflecting the religio-cultural diversity of the South Asian Region. Another set of participants belonged to faith-based organizations. About one third of the participants were attached to various country offices of UNICEF, especially working on Social & Behavioural Change. A few participants represented either the education or the health sector in their respective countries.

Your country (Please select the one relevant for you) 24 responses



(Source: Pre-Workshop Survey)

# (1) You represent a; (Please select the one relevant for you); 24 responses



(Source: Pre-Workshop Survey)

#### **Motivation for participation** as stated by responding participants included:

- ✓ MHD implementation as a part of the formal role to strengthen faith engagement strategies
- ✓ Due to extensive work with faith communities, MHD can become a value addition
- ✓ As faith leaders, regular interventions with children and families
- ✓ Interest in adopting the MHD approach for ongoing work related to children
- ✓ To build networks among faith communities, FBOs, CSOs and development organizations
- ✓ Childhood experiences in living in conflict situations has become a motivation to explore faith engagement for protection of children
- ✓ To strengthen previous learnings in interfaith engagement and dialogue

## **Expectations from the ToT** as stated by responding participants included:

- ✓ To gain an in-depth understanding of the MHD Approach
- ✓ To understand how to become a MHD trainer, and to familiarize with the approach and tools
- ✓ To understand communication frameworks that one can use to engage with faith leaders
- ✓ To understand and learn about the country level implementation of MHD
- ✓ To build close connections across SAR to foster meaningful faith engagement
- ✓ To understand and learn about action planning for cross-sectorial coordinated community driven initiatives
- ✓ To learn psychological perspectives to bring about positive behavioural change

Respondent participants also highlighted the following **skills and characteristics** that they looked forward to enhance through the participation at the ToT:

- ✔ Facilitation Skills and Techniques
- ✓ Team working and networking skills within diverse/ cross-sectorial settings
- ✓ Skills to develop and engage in inter-faith dialogue
- ✓ Self-reflection and listening to children
- Micro training practices
- ✓ Communication skills as a facilitator
- ✓ MEAL techniques

As a part of the survey, participants also made the following suggestions as to the **best** methodologies for the ToT and MHD Training Delivery:

Participatory Approach
Group Activities and Group Discussions including Brainstorming Activities
Story Telling
Case Studies and Evidence Based Learning including Sharing of Experiences
Cognitive and Experiential Learning

Utilization of Visual Aids
Development of Material as Info Kits
Practical Sessions, Field Visits and Role Play
Provision of Study/ Training Materials and Certifications
Contextualized and Uniform Workable Framework for MHD Training Delivery
Focus on Universal Ethics, and Social-Emotional-Ethical Learning for Children

During the ToT, facilitators followed a participatory approach which included space for group activities, group discussions, brainstorming sessions, and space to share experiences of similar initiatives implemented at country level. Participants were allowed to experience spiritual reflections emanating from diverse faith traditions. All participants received a certificate at the conclusion of the ToT.

In the pre-workshop survey, participants were also given the opportunity to share their perspectives on Role of Faith, and the Collaboration between Faith Communities and Development Organizations in Protection and Empowerment of Children, Families and Communities. All the respondent participants (24/32), have highlighted the important role that faith plays in the protection and empowerment of children, families and communities; and also the key importance of collaboration of faith communities and development organizations. Some of the key comments / quotes are given below:

"It is extremely significant and really speaking (it is) a gap within our programmes. We are already making some effort to bridge the gap but (it) requires more follow up and concentrated efforts to streamline religious engagement and interfaith harmony."

- a Participant

"The roles of FBOs are crucial because they have influence in community and families, and whose decisions will affect children's lives. Their contribution and collaboration will bring more effectiveness in UNICEF programs."

- a participant

"Our everyday life is guided by our social, cultural, traditional and religious beliefs. And these practices are most often against rights-based approaches(es). It is very important to build partnerships, build capacities, create awareness and advocate for bringing about changes in practices that are discriminatory and against human right approach(es). Communities look up to their Faith Leaders and community leaders to bring positive changes within their communities. Thus, faith-based leaders and community leaders have a great role to play in that. However, often faith organizations and community leaders may lack information, knowledge and capacities. Thus, development organizations play the intermediary role – to build partnerships, network and capacitate FBOs and community leaders to advocate for their work."

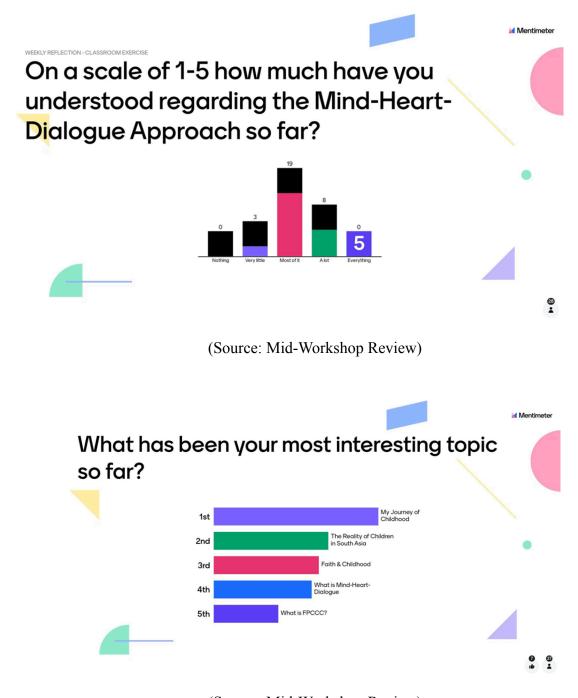
- a Participant

#### 5. Key Learnings from the Engagement of Participants During the ToT

(Source: Mid-Workshop Review, Discussion Notes, and Facilitator Reflections)

## (i) Understanding of the MHD Approach

19 participants reported that they have understood "most of it", and 8 participants reported "a lot" in response to the level of understanding of the MHD Approach. "My Journey of Childhood" topped as the most interesting topic.



(Source: Mid-Workshop Review)

#### (ii) Dharmic Understanding of the "Mind" and "Heart"

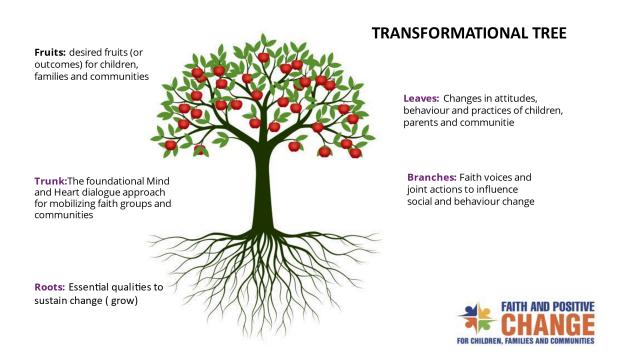
Perhaps the most interesting discussion emanating during the session on the introduction to MHD was the perspective of the Dharmic Understanding of the "Mind & Heart".

Participants pointed out that the MHD Approach has been developed on a premise in which Mind and Heart are considered as two distinct components. However, it was pointed out that in the indigenous Dharmic faith traditions of the sub-continent, especially in Hinduism and Buddhism, - the Mind and the Heart are not necessarily distinct components. Instead, in these Dharmic traditions, the Heart is a constituent element / faculty of the Mind.

Therefore, this is a key learning to consider in the contextualization of the MHD Approach to make space for the Dharmic Understanding of Mind and Heart.

#### (iii) The Transformational Tree: Simplification

The illustration of the "transformational tree" provided in the Facilitators' Guide was found to be complex in its presentation; and the regional training/ facilitating team led by the master trainer adopted the following simplified version for the ToT. This simplified version became helpful in discussing the MHD process and its related MEAL process.



(Source: MHD ToT Regional Master Trainers' Presentation)

# (iv) The Need to Contextualization of Activities: Ignited Discussion on the "Balloon Game"

The Balloon Game, which is a simple activity yet with space for a very in-depth reflection became a topic of ignited discussion among the participants.

While the game has its ethos of highlighting the vulnerabilities children face, and the need for strong protection and safeguarding systems, some participants felt that not knowing what role they played had distorted the meaning of the game for them. This emerged from the group who had to play the role of "abusers". As they did not know the role they were playing, they felt that the labeling of them as "abusers" during the reflection was inappropriate.

While this activity has been commended by a majority with deep reflections as mentioned above, a minority was of the opinion that this does not suit the MHD Approach. This has been repeatedly mentioned in both the mid-workshop review, and the post-workshop evaluation. One of the suggestions has been to remove the term "abusers", and replace it with "challenges children may face".

#### (v) MEAL Framework: The Need for More Clarity on Implementation

During the discussion on the Validation of the MEAL Framework, it became apparent that most of the participants, at a country level, had a good understanding on MEAL practices of their on-going work.

However, as a majority of the participants were not specializing in MEAL, they highlighted that this needs to be further discussed with respective personnel responsible for MEAL in MHD implementation at country levels.

Another key point, related to the above was, as to how this can be incorporated into existing MEAL processes, especially at UNICEF country level mechanisms.

It is expected that this can be further clarified with the consolidation of the National Action Plans at country levels.

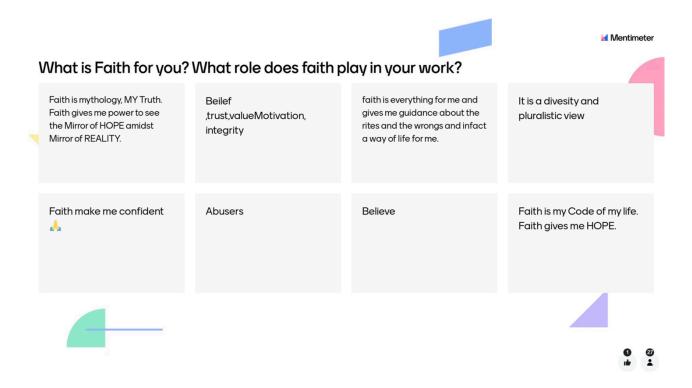
#### (vi) Development of the National Action Plans

One of the key milestones of the MHD ToT was the strengthening of the National Action Plans developed at the Regional Advisory Group Meeting in Sri Lanka. The process was made possible through the facilitation of discussion sessions with the country focal points, so that they could work on a concise yet comprehensive template in collaboration with their respective country teams to develop the national action plans for FPCC initiative that connected to programmatic priorities in each country and then identified the specific activities for MHD rollout within that framework.

During the MHD ToT, it was reiterated that MHD is not a separate activity, and it needs to be viewed and understood as an approach to strengthen meaningful engagement of religious and faith communities on priority issues affecting children. This perspective became helpful in identifying resources and opportunities to integrate MHD Approach into ongoing work.

#### (vii) Perspectives on Faith, and the Role of Faith in their work

While the individual perspectives on faith, and the role of faith in their work remained largely the same in comparison to the pre-workshop survey, there were some comments, as indicated below, that warrant a deep reflection.



(Source: Mid-Workshop Review)

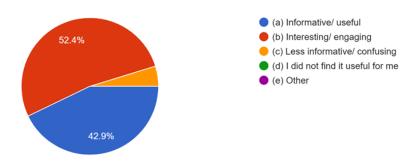
# 6. Post-Workshop Evaluation: Immediate Outcomes (Outputs) and Participant Feedback

A majority of the respondent participants found the workshop **overall either interesting/engaging or informative/useful**.

Paralleling the mid-workshop review, the "Journey of Childhood" topped the list as the most useful/engaging session.

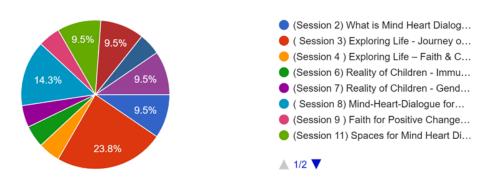
(01) Considering the Workshop as a whole, which of the best below best describes for you/? (Select one answer only)

21 responses



(Source: Post-Workshop Evaluation)

(02) Which session did you find most useful / engaging? 21 responses



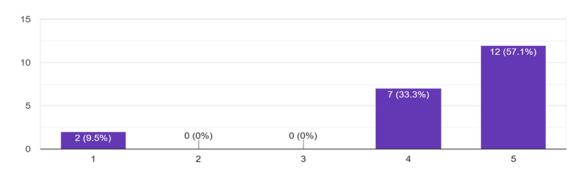
(Source: Post-Workshop Evaluation)

A majority of the respondent participants (19) reported that the facilitators were able to create a safe and inclusive space during the workshop. Also, nineteen (19) participants have found that facilitators were able to engage in participatory methodologies conducive for collective learning. Seventeen (17) respondent participants reported that materials and facilities provided for the workshop were sufficient.

However, there were suggestions if there was a larger space for the workshop and more practical sessions.

(08) Were the facilitators able to create a safe and inclusive space during the workshop? (Rate from 1-5, with 5 being the highest)

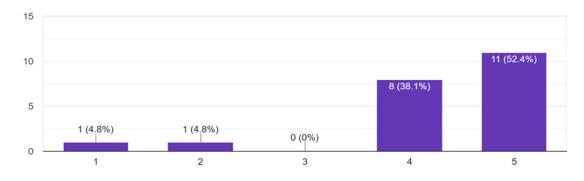
21 responses



(Source: Post-Workshop Evaluation)

(09 Were the facilitators able to engage in participatory methodologies conducive for collective learning? (Rate from 1-5, with 5 being the highest)

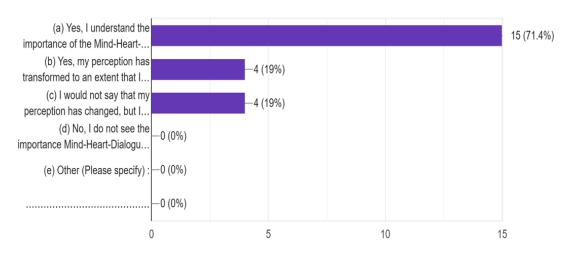
21 responses



(Source: Post-Workshop Evaluation)

Fifteen (15) respondent participants reported that they have come to understand the **importance of the MHD for the faith groups** and development partners to work together for the protection and empowerment of children, families and communities.

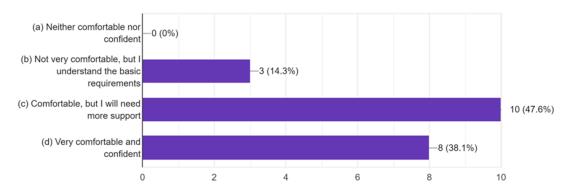
(03) At the end of this Mind-Heart-Dialogue training, do you consider that your perception regarding the role of faith in protection and empowerment of...formed? (Select the most relevant answer for you) 21 responses



(Source: Post-Workshop Evaluation)

Of the respondent participants, ten (10) have reported that they are **comfortable facilitating the MHD** process in their home communities, but will need more support. Eight (08) participants have reported that they are both "very comfortable and confident" facilitating the MHD process in their home communities.

(04) At the end of this training, how do you rate your comfort level in facilitating the Mind-Heart-Dialogue process and activity in your home communities by yourself? <sup>21 responses</sup>



(Source: Post-Workshop Evaluation)

Participants, through the post-workshop evaluation, expressed following feedback / views about the value of the MHD Approach in their work:

"MHD as an approach can add value to the existing work whereby the Faith Leaders can tailor messages to religious and cultural context ensuring that the message they create aligns with their values and norms, so that communities are better able to relate. MHD can be used in our existing work on promotion of Routine Immunization and Complementary Feeding in our priority districts because MHD creates space for open conversations or dialogue, allowing for the exploration of deeper emotional, religious and cultural aspects, barriers and challenges that might not have been fully researched and addressed before. This approach can unearth hidden barriers or challenges that might be impeding the effectiveness and coverage of the existing work, leading to more tailored and impactful solutions. I feel it humanizes the process, making it more relatable and responsive to the needs of the individuals or communities involved."

#### A participant

"The value of bridging the gaps in major religious communities in my country.

MHD can also inform the government the importance of dialogue in the development of social indicators like child safety, women safety and soft power in dealing with socio-political and inter-religious matters." -a participant

"As a faith-based organization working with multiple faith leaders, having novel and adaptive tools of dialogue are lifesaving. We need specific tools to propel the discussion of faith in the direction of fruition. Otherwise, faith remains elusive to the very alternative reality we wish to envision for our children. Hence, MHD is of paramount importance, especially in the current scenario, where the world is witnessing a global polarization with religion, power dynamics in international relations, and environmental degradation."

- A participant

"A more participatory, inclusive, de-centralized and sustainable approach for communicating for greater impact and behaviour change." – a participant

#### 7. Recommendations

## (i) Participant Recommendations: MHD Approach & Facilitators' Guide

- Contextualization of the MHD Approach and the Facilitators' Guide considering the diverse religio-cultural context in South Asia
- Make the terminology more simple and friendly for the faith leaders to comprehend.
- Incorporate storytelling on the faith basis and include written spiritual reflections from different faiths
- Translation of the MHD Facilitators' Guide into local languages
- Accommodation of Diverse Learning Styles: Recognize and accommodate different learning styles. Incorporate activities that appeal to visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learners for a well-rounded approach. This is recommended in order to enhance the user-friendliness of the Guide.
- Suggestion to include detailed case studies and success stories of MHD (perhaps from the African Experience).
- Suggestion to provide a clear description and understanding as to how MHD approach emanated, and its distinctiveness from other similar approaches.

#### (ii) Participant Recommendations: Country Level Implementation of the MHD

Participants have highlighted the following recommendations with reference to the country level implementation of the MHD:

- Financial and technical support for the rollout, especially consider the resource and capacity limitations at sub-national levels in some countries (eg:- Balochistan)
- Support for the consolidation of National Action Plans.
- Consolidation of the MEAL Framework through another round of trainings for either the country focal points or assigned MEAL personnel
- Refresher sessions
- Suggestion to establish sister corners of partnership among countries in South Asia to share the success and lessons learnt from FPCC. This also will create an opportunity for solidarity among faith actors across the region supporting children.
- Support for the planning of country level ToTs, and supportive supervision will be required for country roll-out at least for the first few training sessions.

#### (iii) Recommendations of the Facilitator Team

- ✓ Contextualization of the MHD Facilitators' Guide, the 2023 version. The SAR TOT utilized the 2022 version, except for the MEAL Framework validation (which was based on the 2023 version).
- ✓ Requirement for Refresher Sessions for Trainers to follow-up after the ToT to support them in country level implementation, and to keep them motivated.
- ✓ Follow-up and provide support to countries that have requested for more direct support: India, Sri Lanka, Nepal
- ✓ Consultation with Country Focal Points and MEAL personnel (at UNICEF) to simplify and agree on the MEAL Framework for implementation.
- ✓ The SAR workshop besides being a ToT on MHD, also had to serve to develop the National Action Plans. However, the consolidation and follow-ups of the National Action Plan will require involvement at the RAG level, during RAG meetings that should be held as part of a regular meeting cycle.
- ✓ Bangladesh and Nepal delegations were small, and did not have UNICEF staff presence; and this may require a follow-up at regional level for the National Action Plans to be finalized and to move forward.
- ✓ It was important to have the presence of all the leading partners of the partnership in the planning related discussion, to help coordinate efforts and to support the countries with their planning. Not having a regional level representation from one of the partners had an impact on the workshop dynamics
- ✓ It is important to ensure the engagement of different sectors of UNICEF country offices to identify priorities and resources for religious and faith community engagement using the MHD Approach.

#### Annexures

**Pre-workshop Evaluation Form** 

Mid-Workshop Review

Post-Workshop Evaluation Form

Regional Workshop Schedule

**National Action Plans** 

MHD South Asian Regional Training / Facilitators Team - Sarvodaya Institute of Higher Learning (Sarvodaya Movement, Sri Lanka)

Suchith Abeyewickreme – Regional Master Trainer / Facilitator

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