



EMBRACE DIVERSITY PROJECT

April 2021 – March 2022
FINAL REPORT - MAY 2022

1. GENERAL INFORMATION

Organization	Joel Nafuma Refugee Center (JNRC) at St Paul's Within the Walls American Episcopal Church
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Project Title	Embrace Diversity: Multicultural and Inter-religious Dialogue to promote Inclusive Attitudes
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JNRC Director	The Rev. Austin K. Rios
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BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

The Embrace Diversity project was implemented in Rome, Italy, between **April 1, 2021 and March 31, 2022** by the Joel Nafuma Refugee Center (JNRC), in partnership with the nonprofit ItaliaHello Onus and with contributions from the Niwano Peace Foundation.

The project consisted in 6 monthly workshops of one and a half hours each, held at JNRC, attended by students, refugees and religious representatives. Each workshop has been attended by 15 students, 3 refugees and one or more religious leaders and focused on specific geographical areas representative of refugees involved in the project. The aim is to discover the religious and culturally peculiar aspects of such areas and to identify the spiritual principles that belong to each religion which promote solidarity, cooperation, and peaceful coexistence.

The aim of the project is also to raise awareness on the need to include the foreigner and those who have different religious or cultural background.

PROJECT PHASES

- Selection of participants (April-May 2021);
- Assessment and elaboration of content (June-September 2021);
- Implementation of workshops (September 2021-February 2023);
- Online communication campaign launch and delivery (December 2021-March 2022).

PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT

The purpose of this project is to address the hostility towards diversity in terms of culture, religion, ethnicity, which generates marginalization and exclusion and increases the divisions among individuals and communities.

GOAL OF THE PROJECT

The goal of this project is to build a more inclusive, just and peaceful society by strengthening values based on understanding and inclusion of people belonging to different cultural and religious background through dialogue and collaboration.

OUTPUTS OF THE PROJECT

- An **educational program** addressed to high school students, delivered through 6 workshops led by refugees as well as religious leaders.
- An **awareness online campaign** for digital channels to promote tolerance and acceptance towards diversity in terms of culture and religion.

Phase 1: PARTICIPANTS

In April -May 2021 we identified the participants and assigned active roles as follows:

A group of 27 Y12 students aged between 17 and 18 years old, from the International School **St. George's British International School in Rome** <https://www.stgeorge.school.it>

Three representatives of different religious traditions as follows:

- **Ms. Daniela Di Capua** from **The Italian Buddhist Institute Soka Gakkai** in Rome www.sgi-italia.org Immigration and asylum expert. Currently in charge of the social activities carried out by the Italian Buddhist Institute Soka Gakkai. From 2008 to 2019, Director of SPRAR, the Italian protection system for asylum seekers and refugees. Previously involved in projects related to the European Refugee Fund and in activities of the Italian Council for Refugees (C.I.R.) in the framework of the National Asylum Program.
- **Imam Yahyâ S. Y. Pallavicini** from the **COREIS Islamic Religious Community Italy** <https://www.coreis.it> President of COREIS Islamic Religious Community Italy and member of the general assembly of the great mosque of Rome.
- **Rev. Austin K. Rios** from **St. Paul's Within the Walls American Episcopal Church** <https://www.stpaulsrome.it>
The 15th Rector of St. Paul's Within the Walls Episcopal Church since 2012 and the Executive Director of the Joel Nafuma Refugee Center (JNRC). During that time, he has forged relationships with interfaith and ecumenical partners in order to better serve the guests of the JNRC and promote relationships of trust and compassion across religious divisions.

A group of refugees (JNRC's guests) from four geographic areas (**Colombia, South America; Gambia, West Africa; Afghanistan, Central Asia; Egypt, North Africa**) as follows:

- **Mr. Mansur Nadri**, country of origin: Afghanistan, Central Asia.
In Afghanistan, worked as a coordinator officer, logistic assistant, procurement assistant with U.S Army. Arrived in Italy in May of 2014. Currently working as a volunteer coordinator at JNRC, since November 2018.
- **Mr. Ayman Sabry**, country of origin: Egypt, North Africa.
Worked as a teacher of English in a private school in Egypt. Country of arrival in Europe, Romania in July 2019 and then Italy in August 2019. Currently working at St George's since September 2020.
- **Mr. Cesar Augusto Cuenca**, country of origin: Colombia, South America. Computer Science Engineer experienced in project management based on Information Technologies, sysadmin, Helpdesk. Arrived in Italy in January 2020. From January to March, tried to undertake the import export activity of Colombian coffee reaching out to buyers in Italy. Currently working in a horse field doing general service.
- **Mr. Mahamadou Sankareh**, country of origin: Gambia, West Africa.
Arrived in Italy: January 2014. Works as a cultural mediator at JNRC since 2016.

One workshop facilitator (JNRC volunteer - English teacher) as follows:

- **Mr. Richard Mayne**
Teacher and educational content creator. Has lived in several countries during his teaching career, including South Korea, Spain and Colombia. Living in Rome since 2018, he serves as Service-Learning Coordinator at the JNRC.

One film maker and communication expert as follows:

- **Ms. Giulia Morello**
Author and Director of various cultural events. Teacher of visual communication, audiovisual reportage, storytelling, management of large events. In 2013, founder of O.G.M. (Officine Giulia Morello), a network of creatives and artists engaged in social work through projects for institutions, companies and non-profit organizations.

Phase 2: ASSESSMENT AND ELABORATION OF CONTENT

From June to September 2021, the project team provided an introduction to the Embrace Diversity project & baseline testing for students to highlight important aspects in relation to migration matters and faith traditions.

The students' level of knowledge on migration matters was tested through a questionnaire as follows:

1. *Do you know the difference between a migrant, a refugee and an internal displaced person?*
2. *How many refugees do you think there are around the world?*
3. *How many refugees do you think there are in Europe and in Italy?*
4. *Which country hosts the most refugees?*
5. *Which do you think are the main countries refugees come from?*
6. *Which push and pull factors determine migration?*
7. *How is religion connected to conflicts and forced migration?*
8. *In your opinion, are religious principles and religious traditions the same thing?*
9. *Do you think religion (beyond faith traditions) have a role to play in refugee-related issues?*
10. *Would you like to be involved in the development of a communication campaign in order to promote inclusiveness and enhancement of diversity?*

After students gained a basic understanding of migration issues and the basic, common principles that inspire different faith traditions, both students and refugees were given guidelines on topics to cover during direct interaction.

Also, religious leaders' intervention was guided through 4 questions which meant to better highlight the shared principles and values despite different faith traditions:

- 1) *For a person who embodies your faith, what four words would you use to describe **him**?*
- 2) *How would somebody from your faith help somebody else in **need or danger**?*
- 3) *In your view, what does your religion say about **violence towards others and conflicts**?*
- 4) *How would somebody from your religion deal with people with different views to your faith (different religion/cultural background)?*

Phase 3: IMPLEMENTATION OF WORKSHOPS

WORKSHOP SCHEDULE (6 sessions)

- 13 October: Opening and Introductory workshop - St. George's
- 3 November: 1st workshop, geographic area Afghanistan - St. George's
- 17 November: 2nd workshop, geographic area Egypt - St. George's
- 1 December: 3rd workshop, geographic area Colombia - St. George's
- 15 December: 4th workshop, geographic area Gambia - St. George's
- 19 January: closing event – JNRC

OPENING AND INTRODUCTORY WORKSHOP

The first Workshop on October 13th, 2021 involved all of the participants in the project and was held at St. George's British International School.

Students, refugees and religious leaders discussed on how all religious value systems embrace humanity, caring and respect, and the tradition of granting protection to those in danger. And on how the principles of **modern refugee law** have their oldest roots in these ancient texts and traditions.

It was highlighted that the call to "welcome the stranger" through protection and hospitality, as well as treating all people of other faiths and backgrounds with respect and equality are practices that are firmly rooted in every religion. However, we witness every day persecutions, violence, wars often waged with the banner of defending religious principles.

Based on newspaper/website articles about a historic/current event that challenges the principles, participants discussed about 3 study cases and religious leaders provided explanations on how it is possible for conflicts to arise in the name of religion.

The 3 study cases which have been discussed, are as follows:

- Instability in Myanmar.
- The Taliban's return in Afghanistan and women's condition.
- Northern Ireland still divided by peace walls 20 years after conflict.

FOUR CONSECUTIVE THEMED WORKSHOPS

From November until December 2021, we carried out themed workshops where students, along with one or more refugees from a specific geographic area, explored the principles we should all live by, and shared examples of when we fall short. Each refugee shared its own experience based on specific guidelines.

The outline of each of the 4 workshops was pretty much the same while the geographical area under consideration was from time to time different and related to the host refugee.

Topics were addressed and discussed according to guidelines as follows:

What are the key principles?

1. What are the principles that we should all live by?
2. Give examples of where we do/do not live by these principles in our daily life
3. Why do we not live by these views?

First-hand experience provided by each refugee:

LEAVING THE COUNTRY

4. How discrimination in country-of-origin may lead people to wanting to leave (diversity within the country is not embraced, but used to discriminate)
5. Challenges during the journey, determined by discrimination.

ARRIVING AND LIVING HERE IN ROME

6. How being different here in Rome makes it difficult for people to be accepted
 - a. Refugees Experience
 - b. Students' experiences (what they have heard/seen)
7. What are the **fears** of residents here in Italy that fuels this experience?

HOW TO ADDRESS THE PROBLEMS THAT AROSE THROUGH THE DIALOGUE

8. From the refugee's experience what would have made a difference to them settling here in Italy
9. How can we make a difference?
 - a. How can we convince others to change their perceptions?
 - b. Identification of key factors for planning the awareness campaign
 - c. Production and collection of digital materials for awareness campaign planning

Phase 4: ONLINE COMMUNICATION CAMPAIGN - LAUNCH AND DELIVERY

Starting from the reflections emerged during the workshops with students, religious leaders and refugees, ItaliaHello, project's partner, developed an online communication campaign that was promoted on ItaliaHello and JNRC's social networks (Facebook and IG).

Online content consists of short videos, interviews, pictures and testimonies of participants created by a professional video maker with the support of a communication expert. The communication team participated in each workshop and worked together with students and refugees to identify the format and language best suited to the visibility and dissemination of the project.

3 interviews with religious leaders and 3 interviews with refugees were carried out on the themes of:

- Inter-religious understanding on diversity and peace
- Direct experience of refugees during their travel and stay in Italy

All of this content was published and promoted online and offline between October and December 2021. At the same time, the team worked with the students to outline, through group activities and role-playing games, the final message to be transmitted online to their peers on diversity, on how it is perceived by various cultures and the difficulties that can be encountered in daily life.

Through Storytelling workshops, the claim was identified: 'what diversity is for me, and how can I welcome others in my daily life.

Each student provided their own testimony and a short spot was created. It was officially released online in March 2022. The spot was conceived and developed with the active contribution of the students with the aim of promoting a peer to-peer communication model.

At the end of the activities, another additional video was made, initially not included in the project proposal, to tell the objectives, activities and expected results. The video was made in both Italian and English to reach a wider audience.

All the video content is available at the link below:

https://drive.google.com/drive/u/1/folders/1ZYs9vmZToonfj_8hbZa82vkQo2AfWeSI

PROJECT FINANCIAL REPORT

Below are detailed amounts referring to the funding received in dollars (Column 2). Expenses incurred are reported in euros (Column 4). Column 3 shows the dollar-to-euro conversion made on receipt of the funds (March 2021).

	1	2	3	4	5
Projects components applied	Project Costs (USD)	Amount applied to NPF (USD)	Amount received in EUR March '21	Costs incurred EUR	Name of attachments referring to expenditure items
PERSONNEL					PERSONNEL
Project Coordinator	7200	1380	1100	1237	A Doc - Attachment
Admin/Finance officer	1080				B Doc - Attachment
Cultural mediator	10800	1320	1100	1127	C Doc - Attachment
Refugees compensation	1040	1040	850	770	D1-D2-D3-D4-D5 Doc. - Attachments
ItaliaHello Coordinator	1920	0			N.A.
OTHER					OTHER
Venues	480	480	400	400	E Doc - Attachment
Utilities	120	120	100	390	F1-F2 Doc - Attachments
Sanification	400	400	313	329,4	G Doc - Attachment
Travel	360	360	300	328,2	H1-H2 Doc - Attachments
Printing/Copies	240	240	200	196,34	L1-L2 Doc - Attachments
Coffee Break	120	120	100	270	M Doc - Attachment
Social media campaign	3540	3540	2900	2500	P1-P2 - Attachments
	27300	9000	7363	7547,94	