

**International Women's Cultural Interaction:
Using the Arts to Communicate Peace Across Cultures
September 15th to 22nd, 2018
Batumi/Tbilisi**

A Programme for the Jai Jagat 2020 Campaign

Context and Rationale

Various organizations led by Georgian women are working on peace building, and promoting culture, environment and dialogue across the South Caucuses. There are some remarkable individuals that are also bringing together the voices of grassroots women and men as a way to address gender equality and for reducing overall violence. For example ICCN is one of the largest peace organizations in the region and has developed conflict resolution tools for addressing political differences in the region, with an emphasis on gender equality. Caucasian House, another Georgian organisation inspired by women leaders, aims to contribute to Georgia's multi-ethnic nation-building; to spread universal, humanistic, and civic education; to encourage intercultural dialogue and to build connections between different ethnic and religious minorities. Such efforts are being done in a region, otherwise marred by pervasive geo-political, ethnic, environmental and gender conflicts.

Georgia has been a unique center of Caucasian culture and the arts in the area of theatre, music, poetry; and artists have created innovative cultural interactions to address social issues such as forum theatre, fusion in musical concerts, and polyphonic literature. Many of these artistic expressions move people towards peace, more than other educational methods. Such cultural interactions have inspired youth and women together around processes of reconciliation; and have been a tool for transforming conflict between warring or opposing groups. Gandhi Foundation Georgia (GFG) for example, has recently carried out through its *Project Create* a form of theatre that gains the participation of Georgians and Abkhaz people across their deep political and cold war divides.

There is an interest to expand these efforts by enlarging the field and using theater, music, dance and the fine arts to communicate peace across a larger number of cultures. People from outside the region could take the opportunity to learn about the pluralism of the Caucasian region and also the artistic techniques that reinforce this vision. As well, local people from the Caucasian region could learn from the many other interesting innovations of peace through the arts, going on elsewhere.

Objectives of this International Women's Cultural Interaction

Women's Cultural Interaction: Using the Arts for Communicating Peace across Culture is an initiative that is part of a larger global campaign known as the Jai Jagat 2020 Campaign dedicated to building a global movement for peace and justice. This third international Women's meeting builds on the earlier events in India and the Philippines by shifting the geographical focus and bringing new women from a variety of countries into the international women's peace building network.

Specifically the interaction has four objectives

- **Presenting the arts and other art-based methods as a means to build solidarity, dialog and common experiences among women's networks in Georgia, the Caucasian region as well as internationally**

- **Exchanging know-how about non-violent mobilization and action strategies addressing direct and indirect structural violence in different settings and countries**
- **Expanding and strengthening the international women's network toward mobilizing for local jai jagat action in the respective countries**
- **Exploring women's advocacy issues to be promoted during jai jagat 2020"ON THE MOVE" action in Geneva in the fall of 2020**

The global Jai Jagat 2020 Campaign involves thousands of marchers committed to non-violent change all over the world, to march from India, Belgium, France, Spain, Sweden, Senegal, Mali, and other countries to Geneva in Switzerland. They will meet between 25th September and 3rd October 2020 for the Geneva People's Action Forum, in the city that symbolizes peaceful coexistence and that is home to many UN organizations. Geneva city and canton government have both agreed to welcome the marchers for eight days, to facilitate the dialogue about the conflicts and issues that local people worldwide are facing as a result of a globalized and inequitable economy, polarizing politics and an accelerating arms race that is making peace a distant dream. The Jai Jagat 2020 Campaign focuses on 4 themes related to the UN Sustainable Development Goals: reducing poverty, social inclusion, ecological sustainability/climate change, and halting conflict and violence.

The Georgia International Women's Interaction

It is planned therefore to hold this International Cultural Interaction in Georgia in September 2018 involving primarily women on the subject of *Using the Arts to Communicate Peace across Cultures*. For this to occur *ad hoc* committees named as 'Women and Peace through The Arts Committee' (WaPTA) has been constituted by women from the fields of gender, peacebuilding and the arts in Tbilisi and Batumi. (See names of people below.) Their mandate is to invite 25 local women from the South Caucasus in September 2018 from the region to interface with the twenty-six international guests.

Participation of international guests is being coordinated by the Jai Jagat 2020 International Working Group in cooperation with the coordinator of the **WaPTA Tbilisi group**. The around 25 international guests are coming from Europe (i.e. Germany, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland) the Balkans and from near and middle Eastern countries (i.e. Egypt, Iran, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Turkey), from South East Asia (India, Philippines), from Africa (Senegal, Somalia, Sudan) and from Central America (Mexico). Eleven participants are artists, fourteen come from a background of peace, social and gender activism. Among the participants, a group of five international women and one Georgian theatre director will constitute the artistic programme committee and guide the workshop designs and the planned final performance in Tbilisi. (see list of international participants)

Format of Events (see schedule attached)

The programme will begin with a ceremonial opening on Saturday, September 15th in Batumi, Georgia. The following five days of the interaction will consist of workshops, interspersed with presentations and discussions of Gandhian non-violence and peace building initiatives in Caucasian countries and the participants' region of origin. It will also include a one-day site visit to projects in surrounding communities. The programme will culminate on September 21 with a live public performance by participants and celebration in the Parliament Buildings of Georgia (Queen Tamara Hall) in Tbilisi. Eminent guests to engage in arts that reinforce the message of peace across culture

will be invited. The meeting will end with a final wrap-up session in the morning of September 22, a (voluntary) sight-seeing tour and farewell dinner.

International participants are encouraged to arrive in Batumi (Kobuleti) by Friday, September 14th. (flights to Kutaisi or Batumi; airport pick-up provided) and to depart from Tbilisi on September 23rd (or 22nd).

Coordination Persons/Organizations

WaPtA Tbilisi

Thea Galdava at the Center for Cultural Relations at Caucasian House
Nino Chkhobadze, of the Green's Movement, Friends of the Earth
Tinatin Asatiani Teacher of psychology and counselor
Nana Berekashvili, Professor of Gender Studies, University in Tbilisi
Anna Sarkisyan, Coordinator WaPtA

WaPtA Batumi:

Lela Surmanidze, Vice Mayor, Government of Batumi: <l.surmanidze@batumi.ge>
Sophia Bakuridze, Adjara Government <sophiabakuridze@yahoo.com>
Anichka Sikharulidze, Cultural Department, Government of Batumi
<anichka.formula@gmail.com>,
Nino Chkhaidze, Art Way, Batumi <Chkhaidze.nino91@gmail.com>,

Artistic Directors

Dr. Rama Mani: Transformative Theatre – Geneva, Switzerland (Overall Coordination)
Iman Aoun: Director Ashtar Theatre, Ramalla, Palestine
Dijana Milosevic: Director of DAH Theatre Belgrade
Camelia Ghazali, Theatre Director, Tehran, Iran
Gauri Kulkarni, Theater activist/producer and dancer, India
Irada Gozalova: Artistic Director, Ganja Theatre, Ganja, Azerbaijan
Irakli Gogia: Artistic Director, Akhmeteli Theatre, Tbilisi Georgia

Gandhi Foundation Georgia

Irakli Kakabadze, Convenor, GFG
Heghine Giunazaryan, Coordinator

International Working Group Members of Jai Jagat 2020 and International Convenors

Margrit Hugentobler, Cesci Support Association Zurich; convenor Ekta Europe
Jill Carr-Harris: Ekta Parishad, India

Place of Women's Cultural Interaction in Batumi Area

David Agmashenebeli Hotel and Center;
626 David Agmashenebeli Street,
Kobuleti City (25 km from Batumi),
Adjara Region, Western Georgia
Contact No. +995 599 020175 (Irakli Gogia)