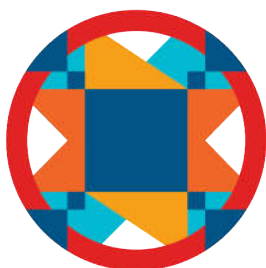


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Special Edition:



CHOGM
Malta 2015



EkoSkola
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Issue 51



A dream come true! Since its launch in 2002, EkoSkola's major target has always been that of promoting students as change agents of sustainability. We have organised several initiatives that placed student voices and actions centre stage in our nation's efforts to promote sustainable development. Extending our students' voices beyond our sho

re was always on our agenda and, although we managed to achieve this to some extent, the organisation of the 2015 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Malta gave us a unique opportunity that we couldn't miss.

Not only did we manage to give students participating in the three FEE international ESD programmes (EkoSkola, LEAF and YRE) an opportunity to participate actively in the CHOGM process, but we have also initiated (with our partners) action to set up a Children's Forum in the coming CHOGM Meeting.

This adventure could not have been possible without the continued support of the Office of the Prime Minister; the Ministry of Education and Employment; the CHOGM Task Force, the President's Foundation for the Well-Being of Society; and the PARKS Directorate.

Preparation for the event



Schools chose a Commonwealth country and a theme from the following list: Education for all; Eradicating poverty; The role of women; Conflict resolution; Clean and safe water for all; Promoting freedom of expression; and Religious diversity. Students discussed the implications of the chosen theme for their chosen country. The EkoSkola network linked certain local schools with foreign ones enabling an exchange of experiences. The deliberations provided the raw material for the EkoSkola Young Citizens' Summit, for in-school thematic exhibitions and for the National EkoSkola-CHOGM Students' Exhibition. Here is a just taster of these educational initiatives.

- Helen Keller Resource Centre twinned with Scotland (<http://sbc.helenkeller.skola.edu.mt/CHOGM%202015.html>)
- Maria Regina College, Mellieha Primary School twinned with India (<http://ecoskola2014-2015.weebly.com/201520161.html>)
- St Gorg Preca College, Marsa Primary School twinned with Mauritius (<http://sgpc.marsa.skola.edu.mt/2015/10/chogm/>)
- St Gorg Preca College, Floriana Primary School focused on Jamaica (<http://sgpc.floriana.skola.edu.mt/2015/12/our-ekoskola-chogm-2015-exhibitionj/>)
- St Ignatius College, Zebbug Primary focused on Pakistan (<https://zebbbugprimaryschool.wordpress.com/2015/11/20/ekoskola-chogm-young-citizens-summit/>)
- St Michael School reviewed the Commonwealth (<http://stmichaelschool.edu.mt/entry/commonwealth-exhibition/>)
- St Paul's Missionary College focused on Cameroon (<http://spmcmssp.org.mt/junior-school/ekoskola/>)
- St Thomas More College, Zejtun Secondary School focused on Papua New Guinea (<http://stmc.zejtunsecondary.skola.edu.mt/young-chogm-summit/>)

Summary of the Events

Students from State, Church and Independent primary and secondary schools participating in Nature Trust Malta's ESD programmes: EkoSkola, Learning About Forests (LEAF) and Young Reporters for the Environment (YRE) participated in these events.

20.11.15: EkoSkola Young Citizens' Summit. The theme of the summit was *Promoting wellbeing across the Commonwealth for present and future generations*. The event was officially opened by HE Marie Louise Coleiro Preca (President of the Republic of Malta) and was attended by 280 students and 55 teachers from 35 schools. During the workshops held this morning, the students had the opportunity to discuss and come up with possible tangible solutions to nurture wellbeing. A declaration, developed from the students' inputs during the workshop sessions, was presented to the Hon. Dr Joseph Muscat, Prime Minister of Malta.



For a more detailed report on the summit visit:

<http://smcsecondary.com/2015/11/24/promoting-wellbeing-across-the-commonwealth/>

23-25.11.15: CHOGM People's Forum. Besides reporting on all the other events, the YRE student reporters interviewed key participants in the CHOGM People's Forum on the 3 different days. Among those interviewed were: HE Marie Louise Coleiro Preca (President of the Republic of Malta), Dr Vandana Shiva (see full interview further on), HE Mary Robinson, ex-President of Ireland (representing Ban Ki Moon) and other dignitaries.



28.11.15: A Voice for the Commonwealth Child. Jointly organised with the President's Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society this event involved the presentation of the Young Citizens' Summit Declaration to the Commonwealth Heads of State with the request that a Children's Forum will form part of the normal CHOGM process. Children prepared a child's paper game containing their Declaration for distribution to all those Heads of Government and distinguished guests attending this event. Present for this event were the Prime Minister of Malta, Joseph Muscat, and the Prime Minister of Canada, Justin Trudeau.



02.12.15: The EkoSkola-CHOGM Students' Exhibition. 14 schools exhibited a selection of items they used for their in-school exhibitions at the foyer of the Ministry of Education and Employment, Floriana. The exhibition was officially inaugurated by the Hon. Evarist Bartolo (Minister for Education and Employment) in the presence of Ms Jane Lambert (Australian High Commissioner to Malta), Mr Joseph Caruana (Permanent Secretary) and other education officers.



04.12.15: The EkoSkola-CHOGM Commitment Grove. This tree-planting activity was organised by LEAF and held at Xrobb I-Ghagin Nature Park. A total of 64 students from 4 different schools planted 53 Tamarisk trees representing the commitment of



Commonwealth countries towards promoting wellbeing across the Commonwealth for present and future generations. HE Marie Louise Coleiro Preca (President of the Republic of Malta) attended the event. A commemorative plaque was unveiled to mark the occasion.

05.12.15: Imagining a Children's Forum for CHOGM 2017. The presentation conveyed on the 28th November was not attended by a large number of Commonwealth Heads of Governments. The presentation was re-enacted for HE Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, the President of Malta, along with parents, guardians, and educators. The appeal was filmed and sent as a CD to the Commonwealth country leaders.

Promoting wellbeing across the Commonwealth for present and future generations

Young Citizens' Summit Declaration



We the children of the Commonwealth countries would like you to consider the following:

- There are over 600 million children in the Commonwealth; 30% of the Commonwealth population.
- Every single one of us, whatever our age or ability, is capable of expressing our **ideas, imaginations, needs** and **worries**.
- Listening to us children is extremely important. No voice is too young to be ignored.
- There are many decisions that you take which affect our lives, and we need to tell you about them. We want to be able to influence our future.
- Listening to us is a promise that all of you made, when each of your countries approved the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Keeping this promise is very important.
- Treat us with dignity and honesty, don't just listen to us but act on our suggestions.

The Environment

- Environment is the source of life, and the space in which we live.
- Our quality of life depends on the quality of our environment.
- We want to live in peace. Do your best to stop wars. Wars destroy lives, families, their homes and the environment. Transfer military funding towards promoting education and eradicating poverty.
- In your decisions protect and respect life in all its forms.
- Do not just talk about protecting the environment, but commit yourself to action
- Many of you used to play in green open spaces when you were children, but many of us are not so lucky. These healthy open spaces continue to shrink.
- We are here on behalf of all children, both present and future generations, to reclaim the environment that is also ours, and is so important to our wellbeing.



Diversity and Inclusion

- No one should ever be excluded from any activity because of their social class, ability, race, gender, sexuality, ethnic origin, religion, or culture.
- We need space to grow, to be ourselves, and to embrace our diversity. Our differences are part of what make us beautiful and unique.
- Look at the way we play and live together in our schools. We get along fine. We don't mind our differences. Can't you do the same?
- Although we might have differences we are equally humans. Strength lies in differences not just in similarities.
- We speak with different tongues, but we all smile with the same language.
- We need to create an environment when everyone feels included, where we can truly be ourselves, where our differences are valued, and where everyone's contribution is respected.
- Poverty and lack of education create barriers. Access and opportunity is a right ... not a privilege. Do your best to eradicate poverty and provide education for all ... especially women and persons with disability.



- No country should be so poor not to have access to medicine and medical treatment and research.
- Listen to the cry of the poor and provide for their basic needs (e.g. clean water, food, security, medication).
- Provide jobs that respect the dignity of workers and ensure a just pay.

Antibullying

- Bullying can happen in many different ways (e.g. cyber-bullying, domestic, verbal, physical, etc.), and it is not always visible.
- Take action to stop people and companies that bully other people and nations on the availability of resources they need to live a good quality of life (e.g. water, food, energy)
- Bullying is never ok, and adults need to take it seriously.
- Do not take short cuts by telling children that the bullying will stop if it is ignored.
- Every day, children like us are bullied into silence, and are afraid to speak up.
- Other children are at risk of becoming bullies themselves, because they have a lot of pain inside which is being ignored.
- We want to be involved in real conversations, so that we can come up with real solutions together, which will help us get rid of bullying.



A children's plan for peace

An interview with Dr Vandana Shiva on her keynote speech at the Commonwealth People's Forum

Today you mentioned the eyesore of fast food outlets on our island. What would you tell the kids that eat and love junk food?

To taste real food, go out into the country; start a garden! And realise that the fresh tomato that you grew with your loving hand is so much better than that rotten ketchup.

During your keynote speech you said that at first you didn't want to go to Paris (for COP 21), but now you are going. What made you change your mind?

What changed my mind is, first, the attacks. I want to make a trip to Paris. I want to bring love for the earth, and the wellness of the earth into the discourse. There is too much talk of war war war... hate hate hate...kill kill kill...and we need to talk about the fact that we need to make peace with the earth. We have the potential to love each other. And so I will go to plant



a garden and take a pledge – with others - that we will take care of this earth. We will create enough abundance through taking care of the earth, so that we will not need conflict; we don't need to have wars.

When did the issue of farmers occur to you?



You know, even when I was young, like you, I was involved in love for the earth. My father was a forester. Then I was involved in women as farmers – planting trees. I didn't see them as farmers. I saw them as women. The issue of farmers came to me in 1984, when the farmers had a problem. But it was defined as a religious problem; exactly like Syria is being defined as a religious issue, or like Nigeria is being defined as a religious issue. And that same year we had a tragedy that a pesticide plant was invading the area. And three thousand people, including children, were affected immediately. Hundreds and thousands are still suffering and children today are being born suffering. And I started asking why are we using poison in agriculture? That's when I realised that this technology has come from war. I started to work with farmers to work on a nonviolent agriculture. So that's when it started... since 1984.

Today you mentioned the effects of stress on us people. What advice would you give us children to find a job that would avoid stress?

Each one of you has to find his own way. In what you love doing. If I love music I will find a way to create music and play music. Or writing. Or football. Every child should know there is no hierarchy in what we do. It's a horizontal humanity. A farmer. A wall street financier. An expert. We are all expert human beings. The second thing – you don't need to look outside to get a short term job for money. Rather look inside yourself and say this is what I'm good at. This is what I love doing. And I will bargain and create conditions so that my passion will find a place in society even if it does not exist! That is where seed banks started – they were my passion. There were no organic movements in India when I started. It's not easy. But if you do something that goes against yourself you will suffer anyway. And that is stress...making money for the speculators.

If you had the opportunity to say something to all the children of the commonwealth countries, what would it be?

We are in a common wealth, which means we are in a common family – and not only humanity. The children who fly – the little birds. The bees and the butterflies. The earthworms. We need to take care of all species. Children of human beings need to take care of children of other species. And if we do that we will create a good world.

What is your opinion to decrease violence?

I think you are violent to something which is separate from yourself. Because you define it as dead matter. It is just a commodity. Just as much as you define an animal as a commodity. And so you put it in a factory, and inject it with antibiotics to maximise its growth; and you forget that it is a sentient being. Even plants are sentient beings. So the way to decrease violence is to realise that we are all part of the earth family. When protecting each other we protect ourselves. When something is part of you, you don't harm it. You don't send away, or harm, your finger...because it's part of you. When you know that we are part of one big human family, then you don't create hate, you don't create violence – you create love.

What are your biggest challenges?

I think my biggest challenges are the challenges we all face – people who are mad. Mad for violence. Mad for wars. People that think that everything is an enemy – an insect is an enemy – so spray pesticide and exterminate. A plant that comes up is an enemy, so spray it and exterminate. Someone with a different religion is an enemy – finish them off. That is my big challenge – to continue to feel one and to continue to talk about the ability of humans with nature and humans amongst each other. It's becoming an increasing challenge because the media is giving only one message and leaders are standing in a queue as if they were children in a school and you don't know who the headmaster is to tell me

Us kids - how can we adapt to the situation of immigrants?

First you have to try to understand why are these people leaving their lands in such numbers? Go back to their crisis, the drought, the climate change. Then realise they didn't create it. It was created by global powers that are creating pollution and putting greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. So realise that actually the immigrants face the same problems and are one humanity. The second is work with your endeavours. You have to be the teachers of humanity. Children fight...you see them fighting in the playground; but then the next day they are friends again.



Because children know how to love. And we, as adults, lose that capacity. So you have to bring your capacity to forgive and capacity to love to us adults. With that capacity you prevent the panic. Cause it's panic we're using in the migration crisis. And we need compassionate language, which has 3 components. We need to protect. People don't ask to become refugees. We need a different development: that's why sustainable development goals. We need to make sure that they are recognised as human beings. And third we have to think of what is the way with this migration crisis. The least violence and the best sharing of compassion.



*And, with the kind of questions you are asking, if you were to decide what would you do about migration, you would have come up with very nice solutions. So why don't you put up a children's plan? **A children's plan for peace?** Children are those that see the solution. You know the story of the Emperor's New Clothes? Everyone believing he is seeing the emperor in clothes – and only a child says the truth? I have a lot of trust and faith in children.*

Dr Vandana Shiva was interviewed by Matthew Schembri, Kristina Catania and Luca Caruana from St Ignatius College, Middle School Handaq.

What did the CHOGM experience mean to me?

It was a breath-taking experience for me as I got to meet many interesting people from different countries, each having valuable thoughts and perspectives. It also gave me an opportunity to widen my mentality. The People's Forum was a very interesting event where a lot of different and recent topics were discussed including how to make our society resilient, global warming as well as the 'Orange the world campaign', a campaign favouring Women Rights. We were also given the unique chance of interviewing guests and asking for their opinions. I still remember what one of them told me: "Don't believe politicians because they are politicians. Believe in yourself because you found out for yourself." And that left a big effect on me.

Jeanine Scerri Form 3D - St Monica School Gzira

The CHOGM experience was an enriching one for both my students and me. The YRE programme provided a unique opportunity to attend the People's Forum, interview the President and other distinguished guests whilst making the young students' voice heard regarding invaluable subjects discussed during the CHOGM meetings such as migration issues, climate change and human rights.

Gabriella Parsons, teacher at St Monica School Gzira

Media Coverage

- It-tfal isemmghu lehinhom dwar kwistjonijiet li sa jkunu fl-agenda taç-CHOGM (News item on TVM News – article & video clip – Nov 20, 2015):
<http://www.tvm.com.mt/mt/news/it-tfal-isemmghu-lehinhom-dwar-kwistjonijiet-li-se-jkunu-fuq-l-agenda-tac-chogm/>
- Is-sehem tal-istudenti fiç-CHOGM (News item on One News – video clip - Nov 20, 2015):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2C5wBkDmZuY&feature=youtu.be>
- “Huwa dritt tagħkom it-tfal li titkellmu u huwa d-dmir tagħna l-adulti li nisimgħukom, nagħrblu x’qed tgħidu u nağixxu” – Il-President ta’ Malta. (Press release issued by the office of the President – article - Nov 20, 2015):
<http://www.gov.mt/en/Government/Press%20Releases/Pages/2015/Nov/20/pr152612.aspx>
- EkoSkola - CHOGM Young Citizens’ Summit (CHOGM Malta Newsroom – article – Nov 20, 2015): <https://chogm2015.mt/news/ekoskola-chogm-young-citizens-summit>
- The President’s Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society gives the Commonwealth Children a voice (Press release issued by the office of the President – article - Nov 28, 2015):
<http://www.gov.mt/en/Government/Press%20Releases/Pages/2015/Nov/28/pr152686.aspx>
- EkoSkola students’ exhibition (Times of Malta – article – Dec 18, 2015):
<http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20151213/education/Ekoskola-students-exhibition.595585>
- Planting of 53 tamarisk trees (Times of Malta – article – Dec 18, 2015):
<http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20151227/environment/Planting-of-53-tamarisk-trees.596954>
- ES CHOGM Part One (video clip on preparation for the EkoSkola Young Citizens’ Summit – May 09, 2016): (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NMngat0zWjw>)
- ES CHOGM Part Two (video clip on EkoSkola Young Citizens’ Summit – May 09, 2016):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3diiacNk8ME>

Schools participating in the CHOGM experience

De la Salle, Junior School
Gozo College, Ġharb Primary
Gozo College, Rabat Primary
Helen Keller Resource Centre
Maria Regina College, Mellieha Primary
Our Lady Immaculate School – Hamrun
Sacred Heart College – Senior School
St Aloysius College, Secondary School
St Benedict College, Kirkop Secondary
St Claire College, San Ġwann Primary B
St Edward's College
St Francis School, B'Kara
St Francis Secondary School, Sliema
St Ġorġ Preca College, Floriana Primary
St Ġorġ Preca College, Marsa Primary
St Ignatius College, Secondary School, Ħandaq
St Ignatius College, Żebbuġ Primary
St Jeanne Antide College, Primary School, Gudja
St Joseph School Blata l-Bajda
St Joseph Junior School Sliema
St Joseph School, Sliema, Senior Section
St Margaret College, Secondary Verdala, Cospicua
St Margaret College, Senglea Primary
St Michael School, St Venera
St Monica School, B'Kara
St Nicholas College, Rabat Secondary
St Patrick's Salesian School Sliema
St Paul's Missionary College, Junior School
St Theresa College, B'Kara Primary
St Thomas More College, Żejtun Secondary

If you would like to contribute to this newsletter please contact Prof Paul Pace, National EkoSkola Co-ordinator, on paul.j.pace@um.edu.mt.

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