

"Cultural Variations"

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ABSTRACT

Considering the developments in this global world, it's essential to discuss the cultural diversity. Although we are brothers in humanity, each specific country has its own behavior ,language , dresses , actions, reactions, customs and norms which are affected by it's environment. This is the reason why it's vital to increase public awareness of the importance to protect the environment and promote sustainable development. The basic challenge is to understand these variations to communicate well based on respect and trust.

Keywords : *Cultural Diversity, environment, Understanding.*

1.What is culture?

UNESCO Defines culture as a set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group. It encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, values systems, traditions and beliefs. Respecting and safeguarding culture is a matter of Human Rights. Cultural Diversity presupposes respect of fundamental freedoms, namely freedom of thought, conscience and religion, freedom of opinion and expression, and freedom to participate in the cultural life of one's choice. (1)

2.Cultural diversity is our collective strength:

The Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development (September 2002) acknowledges that our rich diversity, which is our collective strength, should be used to ensure sustainable development (par. 16). Cultural Diversity, indeed, is not just a natural fact that we need simply recognize and respect. It is about plurality of knowledge, wisdom and energy which all contribute to improving and moving the World forward.(1)

3. Cultural Diversity across one country:

Starting from my heritage as a Palestinian, there are many cultural differences in Palestine itself. For instance, traditional dress, which is still the symbolic meaning of our affiliation to our home, differs from one city to another. We, here in Nablus, developed an embroidery dress that stresses our style. Also ,in Jenin,women improved another style of that dress. And say the same things about the other cities.

Looking to other cultural variances in our Palestinian sub-cultures, each city is improving its own industries to be famous for. For example, Nablus famous for its "Nabulsi soap" and " Al-Kunafa Al-Nabulsia", but Al-khalil has a prominent grape.

And even the language in the same country maybe different. So, we have an official language and sub-language.

4.Cultural Variations across different countries:

But what about the cultural differences between countries? We have many dimensions in this field, ranging from the official dress to customs and norms variations.

In Scotland , people used to wear their traditional skirt. In India they have completely special dress that is more differ than that we have as a Palestinian.

Even wrong translations affect communication among nations. For instance ,we all remember how Chevrolet tried to market the Chevy Nova in Latin America. In English , the word nova refers to a star. But in Spanish, it means" doesn't go" Would you buy a car with this name?!!!(2)

Even, colors have several meanings that distinct according to the culture. We used to wear black clothes to stress our sad or unhappy state and white for pureness ,wedding or Pease . This fact is changed when we move to another community as they suggest white for the painful events!!!

In addition , it's vital to talk about customs and norms. Some countries don't allow girls learning , so they don't approve or express themselves. Other nations don't permit women to work. Another one imposes fines on those who pollute the public places, many countries don't.

5. The effect of wrong thoughts and behaviors:

Many wrong thoughts and behaviors lead to miserable effects on environment . Building factories beside houses , the smoke that is generated from vehicles , and the garbage we throw away in the sea and streets and so on, are all indicatives of the state of the environment. So, it's important to provide some control through certain procedures. First, government should focus on the development of water and wastewater treatment plants, sewage systems, and solid and hazardous waste management systems because laws and regulations alone will be ineffective without the necessary infrastructure for dealing with waste and pollution.(3) Second, existing structures for enforcement , in particular municipalities , local authorities and the existing court system, must be fully developed and utilized.

6.How to reduce the effect of cultural diversity which is discussed previously?

- '1. Treat all living beings with respect and consideration.
2. Integrate into formal education and life-long learning the knowledge, values, and skills needed for a sustainable way of life.
3. Strengthen democratic institutions at all levels, and provide transparency and accountability in governance, inclusive participation in decision making, and access to justice.
4. Uphold the right of all, without discrimination, to a natural and social environment supportive of human dignity, bodily health, and spiritual wellbeing, with special attention to the rights of indigenous peoples and minorities.
5. Affirm gender equality and equity as basics to sustainable development and ensure universal access to education, health care, and economic opportunity.
6. Ensure that economic activities and institutions at all levels promote human development in an equitable and sustainable manner.
7. Eradicate poverty as an ethical, social, and environmental imperative.
8. Advance the study of ecological sustainability and promote the open exchange and wide application of the knowledge acquired.

9. Adopt patterns of production, consumption, and reproduction that safeguard Earth's regenerative capacities, human rights, and community well-being.

10. Prevent harm as the best method of environmental protection and, when knowledge is limited, apply a precautionary approach.

11. Protect and restore the integrity of Earth's ecological systems, with special concern for biological diversity and the natural processes that sustain life.

12. Secure Earth's bounty and beauty for present and future generations.'⁽⁴⁾

Also, The Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC), a partnership established in 2002 among the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the UN Environment Programme, and the UN Development Programme, is an important attempt to test environmental peacemaking arguments. Its objective is to identify, map, and respond to situations where environmental problems threaten to generate tensions or offer opportunities for cooperation. Yet ENVSEC also illustrates the hurdles commonly faced by attempts to put environmental peacemaking ideas into operation. Host governments often contest the idea of environment-security linkages, or consider them less important problems. Various stakeholders have different expectations, and political sensitivities must always be considered.⁽⁵⁾

If we do these procedures we will survive with respect and in a comprehensive environment.

Conclusion

Finally, culture is society's personality and if we understood this culture we can communicate, interact ,even market our services and products and share the ideas across countries because without mutual understanding, differences may generate conflicts that, when managed with violence, lead to considerable violations of human rights.

References

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4. [http://www.haguepeace.org/files/morePeaceLessons/Environmental%20Protection%20for%20Social%20Equality%20\(Kathleen%20USA\)](http://www.haguepeace.org/files/morePeaceLessons/Environmental%20Protection%20for%20Social%20Equality%20(Kathleen%20USA)).

5. <http://www.worldwatch.org/node/70>.