ANNUAL REPORT 2011-12

INTRODUCTION

IDCR, the Institute of Dialogue with Cultures and Religions, located within Loyola College Campus, is a research institute affiliated to the University of Madras for a doctoral programme on Comparative Religion and Culture. The institute helps people at large, and students particularly, in breaking differences and building bridges, in resolving conflicts and ensuring peace, going beyond the boundaries of caste, creed, and culture.

RESEARCH

Currently there are 3 research guides: Dr. C. Joe Arun, Dr. Alangaram, and Dr. Maria Arul Raja

RESEARCH PROJECTS

A research project has been initiated by IDCR on the Role of religious/moral education in colleges in Chennai city in providing quality education. It is partly funded by Chennai Corporation and Institute of Classical Tamil Culture. It is at the level of data collection at present.

- **Caste and Development** (The Role of Caste in Development)
- Dalit rights and International Civil Society Activism-Socio–Cultural Research Project funded by Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), UK. Coordinated by IDCR along with other NGOs, Chennai and School of Oriental & African Studies, UCL, London.
- **Caste and Violence**: (2007-10) IDCR undertook a field research that looked for the reasons behind violent caste clashes in southern, northern districts in Tamil Nadu. It also tried to identify measures that could prevent caste conflicts.
- **Gender Discrimination**: A research project on designing an intercultural and inter-religious model for eradicating gender discrimination has been initiated by Fairfield University (Jesuit), USA and IDCR this year. This inter-cultural and inter–national partnership aims to provide a model for our collective resolve to find solutions to social problems.
Pilot study has been done with the help of students of Social Work, and Medical Sociology and the data are being entered in SPSSS by a team of lecturers from the Dept of Statistics, Loyola.

NATIONAL CONSULTATION

- A National Consultation on Conflict Resolution was jointly organized by IDCR and Dept. of Social Work, Loyola College on 12 – 14 Dec 2011. Eight scholars from various parts of the country attended.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

- Diploma program in Conflict Resolution was organized by IDCR & Department of Social Work, Loyola College in February – March 2011. Diplomas have been conferred upon 17 students.

INTER-CULTURAL AWARENESS

- A course on ‘Understanding Indian culture, religions and democracy’ for a group of students from Canisius College, Buffalo, U.S, on 05 – 06 Jan 2012. For the past six years IDCR has been conducting this annual inter-cultural awareness program for the students and faculty of this college.

REGULAR PROGRAMMES

Nool Maalai

- ‘Nool Maalai’, originally an initiative of Culture & Communication, Loyola, Chennai, aims at bringing people together to discuss new, important books which deal with issues related to society, culture or religion. And whenever possible, IDCR invites the author of the book for an interaction. IDCR had arranged 7 such Nool Maalai programmes in 2011-12.

Inter-religious celebrations:

- To celebrate the three important festivals of India’s 3 great religions – Deepavali, Muharram and Christmas IDCR organized an inter-religious celebration on 20 Dec 2011. There were four speakers to highlight the salient features of each religion.

IDCR’S PEACE RANGERS & MADRAS CHRISTIAN COUNCIL OF SOCIAL SERVICE (MCCSS)

Vote Wise rally was organized by IDCR’s Peace Rangers and Madras Christian Council of Social Service (MCCSS), at Labor Statue, Marina Beach, Chennai.

Yaadum Oore Yaavarum Kelir was organized on Gandhi Jayanti. Student volunteers, coordinated by IDCR’s Peace Rangers, undertook this program. It was aimed at creating
bonds between people from various States who come to Tamil Nadu at the Central Railway station, Chennai.

PEACE RANGERS OF IDCR AND CARITAS

Peace Culturals, Art of Peace, Melody of Joy, Vote Wise

PUBLICATIONS

- *The Challenges of Fundamentalism, Taming the Violent, Beyond Dialogue, and Living in a Secular Democracy* were authored by Dr. Michael Amaladoss and published by IDCR.

NEWSLETTER

- IDCR publishes a biannual newsletter called *Harmony*. It is sent to collaborators and well-wishers.

INDIVIDUAL ENGAGEMENTS

Dr. Michael Amaladoss has been travelling to various countries like Belgium, China, Korea, Thailand, Mauritius, and Taiwan giving lectures on Intercultural and interreligious themes. He was also giving courses on Christian theology in Bangalore, Pune, and Chennai. He published over 12 articles in reputed journals in India and abroad. Similarly, Dr. Joe Arun was lecturing on Intercultural sensitivity and Religious harmony on various occasions in and around Chennai.

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

IDCR plans to publish three books – Religion and Violence, Caste Violence, Caste and Politics and booklets on communal violence. The institute also intends to organize programmes on peace education in Schools and Colleges. In this context, Mr. Ross Feehan, a student from Stanford University, has agreed to run a workshop on Dialogue and Peace Building for the Chennai city college students in June-August 2012. His programme shall also be supported by the *Peace Rangers* of IDCR. IDCR would also like to initiate a project on Festivals.