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PROJECT SUMMARY AND GUIDELINES

THE BEYOND INITIATIVE

SEEDING THE DANCES OF UNIVERSAL PEACE IN NON-WESTERN COUNTRIES

Introduction

The Beyond Initiative (BI onwards) is a pre-designed pilot process to take the message, blessing and healing of the Dances of Universal Peace (DUP onwards) to new areas in non-western countries, focusing on the Middle East, Asia and Africa.

How will the DUP be received by non-western cultures? Is this practice something appealing for these nations? Can we find, nurture and train local DUP leaders who will be able to hold the practice with their communities?

We are practicing ‘out of the box’ thinking and service oriented activism. The project is demonstrating the potential of the Dances of Universal Peace in ways that go beyond the historical ones. Both in the Middle East and in Asia the DUP have showed so far to bring a very much needed possibility of nurturing networking and communities (established and emerging, urban or rural), whilst bringing fresh water to the thirsty souls searching for a universal spirituality and planetary awareness amidst rigid political, social and religious structures. Most of these countries are under-privileged ones and its people might never get the chance to experience DUP if we don’t organize and sponsor it.

These guidelines are meant to be useful for the sponsors, administrative team, mentor teams and new mentored leaders in the new regions in order to better understand the approach and methodology and keep enacting the spirit of the BI in their successive involvements and collaborations.

Overall Strategy

1. Networking for outreach: the BI through DUP-IN has made an institutional alliance (agreement of understanding) with GEN (Global Ecovillage Network) who operates worldwide through 5 regions: North America, Latin America, Europe, Africa, and Asia/Oceania. Many of the new generations of the DUP leaders, especially in Latin America, are working as “world changers”, involved in environmental and cultural restoration processes, activism, permaculture and ecovillages.

There are natural bridges and contacts between GEN and DUP families, and a win-win situation is pursued, in which GEN local networkers in the Middle East, Asia and Africa, are being invited to participate, benefit, get trained and support this process.

Apart from these connections the BI is always connecting with the broad alternative layer of society in those new territories. Environmental field people, health and healers, artists and musicians, organic agriculture networks, social innovation hubs, NGOs, activists, dance people, yoga practitioners and centers, meditation groups, alternative schools, etc.

2. We will have a special focus on the younger generations for this project (local leaders and guest teachers ideally would be from younger generations). It has been demonstrated that vibrant engaged young dance leaders will attract naturally vibrant engaged young dancers. Of course this is not a rule set in stone and everybody is welcomed but the guideline is in place to always remember that because this is a long term project, its long term sustainability depends on planting the seeds in fresh long running fertile grounds.

Also the style of doing the work as a volunteering service with no honoraries is mostly suitable to younger (but very experienced) dance mentors who find enough reward in the possibility of being hosted and shown around in exotic countries, while at the same time traveling light in budget, luggage and agenda.

3. The 3 ways of engaging with the local leaders. The basic approach is to find the door openers for any given new country. This means one or more people interested in engaging in the 3 following ways: The first is to attend an international dance training outside of their country. The second is to organize local events (usually 1 opening session, short and easy to attend, followed by a weekend workshop of 1 or 2 days depending on the conditions) with a visiting mentor. The third is to keep the practice alive in their own places and communities after the mentor is gone.

The 3 ways of engagement must go together but the order in which they occur may vary.

4. The 3 steps to plant the seed:

Step one is the small events, sessions, non-residential workshops. Planting season. This may take one or two years typically with minimum 1 visit of a guest mentor per year and no more than 2 visits any given year.

Second step in those countries or communities where the seed has sprouted (a local circle of practitioners exists) is to run residential dance camps of 3-4 days (1 per country) with a second guest teacher (a team of 2 teachers) once a year. These national camps are expected to continue to happen every year or every two years. This is the nurturing season.

Step 3 is to create regional dance leaders training camps concentrating leaders in training from different countries (one for the Middle East, one for Africa, one for Asia). Again this can happen once a year or every two years. This is the ripening season. Sometimes the steps do not happen in a linear way as in Turkiye where we started right from the beginning with caravans and regional trainings.

5. Caravans: in the BI we consider the caravans as a vehicle to strengthen the process and not as an objective of the project. They are designed to serve the bigger purpose of the seeding. They are designed to serve the regional dance leaders training and to strengthen the local dancing communities. In a nutshell

is about setting up a collective trip with international participants from the wider DUP global family. Invite them to one of the countries to be hosted by our local friends and guided through an adventure to spiritual, cultural and natural treasures of the visited country. The caravans operate as autonomous teams composed by BI mentors and local dance leaders in training, managing their own self generated budget and expenses. The caravans operation provides resources to pay some of the travel expenses of their teams, offers a few free seats on the caravan to extra guest teachers who want to come and support the training, sponsor scholarships to regional dance leaders attendance to the training camp, pays economic compensation to its own team (who still volunteer above the compensation) and when possible, provides resources to start a local fund for the development of the DUP managed locally and autonomously.

Timeline and brief history

The BI started operating in 2017 building the first alliances and strategies as a project funded by DUP-IN through a legacy received previously and has been supported onwards by donations and contributions from the wider DUP global family, including a 3 years funding from Oneness Project given specifically to BI.

In 2018 the cross pollination between Latin America and Middle East started with a Turkish delegation attending the DUP training camp at Atlantida Ecovillage, Colombia, where the main teachers, mentors and leaders of Latin America gather yearly. This collaboration is still happening and many of the mentors of the new leaders from the Middle East are from Latin America.

Then the first Dance Camp and Caravan in Turkiye took place later that year with global participants plus Middle East participants interested in DUP. Also the DUP were part of a gathering called the Conference of the Birds in Turkiye with the presence of some of the teachers of the camp. This collaboration is still happening also. Later that year a mini caravan of multiple DUP workshops in different locations in Israel took place also.

In 2019 the same strategy repeated with the addition of a small caravan in Iran including a dance camp for locals, and the first DUP camp in Israel. This time there were delegates from Africa and Asia present in the training camp.

2020-2021: COVID Stop of international activities but DUP local circles continued.

2022: Turkish delegates attended training camp in South America to reboot the organizers team for the next Caravan. National dance camp in Turkiye in June with an international guest teacher. 3rd Regional training camp and Caravan in Turkiye with a robust team of 7 guest mentors. 2nd DUP camp Israel with 2 guest mentors. Delegates from Asia were again present in Turkiye who then played a key role in local organization for the 1st planting season in Asia including India (3 locations), Vietnam (3 locations), Indonesia (2 locations), Maldives (1 location) and Thailand (2 locations, including a final international camp attended by current and prospect leaders and organizers from the countries listed above and new countries also).

2023: First planting season in North of Africa (Morocco and Tunisia). Second planting season in Asia while in the Middle East the nurturing and ripening activities continue (national dance camps in Iran, Turkiye and Israel plus the training camp and Caravan in Turkiye).

Principles of the Local Action

1. Planting Season Approach: use of foundational dances as much as possible, make sure to present the universality of DUP, design the session with the inputs of the local organizer in terms of needs, type of people and cultural and religious sensitivities, translate one of the classic DUP from English into local language (Mir Miru Mir for example) to provide the experience of singing in the mother tongue of the people.

2. Training Camps contents and methodology: the regional training camps need to include aspects that allow the trainees to get direct transmission of the pillars of the DUP practice. Also to prepare them to meet the certification criteria. Among the recommended contents are: deepening programs into the individual traditions covered by DUP, history, Murshid SAM and Hazrat Inayat Khan teachings and life, elements of mastery (see the DUP library), the different walks, skills workshops (playing instruments, singing, body awareness), the foundational manual keys on leading and on dancing, introduction to meditation practice, etc.

It should also include in the program spaces for cultural exchange (magic nights of talent shows by country, conversation methodologies, bridge building, etc.)

3. Training Camps Laboratories: in this methodology the big group is divided into several smaller circles which at the same time will have a dance program in parallel spaces. There should be 2 laboratory spaces. One open only to the leaders already in training and another day open to all who want to give it a try. These laboratories are open to the people of the region and not the participants of the Caravan as they have opportunities in their own countries. The mentors and the musicians are divided equally among the groups and all dance leaders of the caravan are invited to help the brand new beginners to prepare their first time ever dancing. Constructive feedback is offered by the mentors to each group of leaders.

4. Don't Rush with the mentoring. Instead of going out there hunting for possible leaders or offering them to be mentored, let them experience first the dances and the dance leading in the laboratories, let them experience leading dances in their localities, and only after they have experienced it and know what it entails, and have found their energy to take a couple of steps, then bring them into the leaders guild and formal mentoring system.

5. Collaboration and friendship among local new leaders: putting emphasis in small groups and teams of DUP leaders in training in each location for the ongoing organizational tasks and keeping the practice

alive after the workshops or camps through local regular dance circles. Less emphasis on the individual charismatic talented person and more on the small group shared journey.

6. Empower others and allow growth beyond yourself. The 4 years rule: the guest teachers & mentors should not become permanent elements of the developing regions, they should not come more than 4 years to the same camp or country in order to empower locals to establish their own independent connections with the bigger DUP family, network and collection of teachers available. To accomplish this, one of the keys is to not become the overarching mentor of any given country or place and as soon as possible stop taking mentees and pass this responsibility to the most advanced local newly certified DUP leaders. So in the future the new regions will have their own mentors. Make yourself expendable rather than becoming the fundamental keystone of the entire system.

Also as a dance leader in a new region, you shouldn't receive more than 4 years of travel aid support to attend camps in order to leave space for new waves of leaders to enjoy this benefit. Same goes to caravan teams, committees, etc.

7. Travel aid support is available only to leaders in training who are active in their locations, leading dances or organizing regular circles, with a mentor and members of the leaders guild.

This principle does not apply to leaders coming from new regions still in early stage and where the guests participants will have no previous experience or mentor, but rather will act as local links and openers of the new spaces for the planting season.

Each leader can only apply once a year for travel support and cannot accumulate support for subsequent years.

8. The national camps for the first 4 years should be organized with mentors who are part of the BI team.

9. The DUP are a vehicle not a destination: the deeper purpose of the BI is not to enlarge the number of countries practicing DUP, or the quantity of dance leaders in the world, or colonize uncolonized territories. It is to actively play a role in the awakening of the planetary consciousness and the weaving of communities and spiritual families that can function as containers for such an awakening.

The Beyond Initiative Team

This project was conceived and designed by Arjun, Jorge Calero, from Colombia, as the result of his connection with the ecovillage movement and network and 15 years of direct experience with DUP outreach in new regions in Latin America and 14 years experience of organizing the DUP training camps at Atlantida. This outreach and this trainings have been done in association with other mentors and teachers who precisely form the initial BI team:

Lakshmi Lorena Tamariz from Ecuador, a DUP Mentor & Sheikha in the Sufi Ruhaniat has 22 years of experience of building a local family of dance circles in different areas of Ecuador. She has empowered and certified many dance leaders and encouraged them to work united as a team. Lakshmi has mentees in Turkiye and Iran with the BI.

Malika Elena Salazar from Colombia & USA, a DUP mentor & Guide in the Sufi Ruhaniat has 15 years of experience of building a local family of dance circles in México. She has worked in dance leader trainings also in the USA. Malika has mentees in Turkiye and Israel with the BI.

Nur Jahan Roxana Campos from Chile, a DUP mentor & Guide in the Sufi Ruhaniat has 10 years of experience of building a local family of dance circles in Chile. She has brought the DUP into bigger scale events and also has mentees in Europe. Through her own travels Roxana was one of the original connections to the Turkish communities which received the BI.

Nuraddin Juan Bayon from Spain, a DUP mentor in training & Initiate in the Sufi Ruhaniat has 8 years of experience of building a local family of dance circles in Spain. He has brought the DUP into new communities in Spain and in the Middle East and has successful outreach experience. Nuraddin has mentees in Turkiye and Iran with the BI.

Arjun Jorge Calero from Colombia, a Senior Mentor of the DUP, a Sheikh in the Sufi Ruhaniat, co-founder of Atlantida ecovillage and the Latin American Network of Sustainable Communities. Arjun has mentees in Turkiye, Iran and Israel with the BI.

As Project Director Arjun is responsible to the DUP-IN Board of Directors, accountable for organized, clear and effective use of funds, for the written reports, the fundraising campaigns and the general execution of the projects in all its lines and regions. This role has economic compensation by a percentage of budget executed and not by annual or monthly wage. In this way the BI has no administrative cost in the months or years (2 years pause with COVID) when it is not operating.

The most important team members of the BI are the dance leaders and friends from the new regions who have taken responsibilities on organizing workshops, national camps or caravans. In the Middle East: Rila, Alper, Ernesto, Pegah, Sinan, Sheri, Arzu (worked as organizers in Turkiye), Hadas and Yair (organizers in Israel), Ramona, Mehran, Bitá, Diba (Iran). In Asia: Natasha, Andres, Prem Shakti, Lison, Sheetal, Marco, Siddarth (India), Thao Kin, Phuong Bui, Mai Ly (Vietnam), Luvian, Katie (Indonesia), Ammu, Marie, Ahmed (Maldives) Om, Na (Thailand) Trudy, Karen (China and more). Many other names not included here organizing dance circles and sessions and keeping up with their training as dance leaders. Keeping the flame going. Keeping up with the seed care.

There are also many collaborators with the project, including senior teachers who have donated their time and effort and joined the Caravans, Training Camps and planting seasons. Special thanks to Pir Shabda who also helped with reports and fundraising. Murshid Allaudin also raised funds for BI. Other supporters include dance mentors like Jelena, Narayan, Ma Mer Khabira, Dakini, Deva, Fatima and many dance leaders who have come to the caravan and trainings.

Joining the BI team is an open invitation to new generations of mentors who have previous experience in building and sustaining local communities of DUP, experience with successful outreach which left behind a functioning sustainable process and experience with DUP trainings. If not experienced in any of these areas, then a humble and predisposed heart is sought to learn and get experience inside the BI.

IN THE LONG TERM VISION, it is the Middle East advanced leaders who will be reinforcing the camps and trainings in Asia and Africa once they are ready.

Special thanks to Aziz, Darvesha and Martha from DUP-IN for their years of support to the BI in the form of time for meetings for visioning and problem solving, funds management and general enthusiasm. Likewise gratitude for the entire BoD of DUP-In (present and past members who believed in the BI).

Additional Notes About Funds Use

1. Most of the budget of the BI is spent on tickets to enable DUP teachers to visit the areas, and to fund travels of the local leaders to DUP trainings abroad. It also includes local expenses like hotel and food whenever those are not being provided by the local organizers. Also visa fees, domestic transport between locations of different events, etc.
2. The BI does not pay any honoraries to DUP leaders, local team members, mentors or teachers of the BI. However they can receive honoraries directly from the local events or caravans whenever that is possible. This is a service oriented project and the team members and collaborators prioritize accessibility to all for the events, rather than projected personal income. When honoraries are received they belong to the teacher and not to the BI.
3. The camps and the workshops should be very affordable or free donation based, but not entirely free of charge. This helps to build in from the beginning a shared responsibility to keep the process rolling and a culture of reciprocity. As a minimal standard, each event should raise enough to pay for the venue. Open short dance sessions of 2 or 3 hours free of charge are also part of the strategy.
4. Whenever possible, local organizers and events should provide not only the local expenses but the connections and help for the visiting teacher to experience and get to know the place and people better. Local dancers should be invited to help local organizers with this support for the visiting teachers.
5. All costs associated with extra travel and tourism within the days outside of the DUP events, camps and caravans must be covered by the personal budget of the guest teacher. The BI does not pay for any of those extra days and expenses.
6. The BI only covers budget expenses: simple hotels, simple restaurants, simple budget flights bought with enough time in advance. If the traveling teacher wishes to get into first class tickets, expensive restaurants, car rentals, luxurious hotels, etc., the basic budget from BI still will be available but the difference will be paid from personal money.

7. When the caravans and camps produce enough to compensate the organizer teams, these teams are kindly invited to divide the surplus between themselves and a collective fund. The distribution among the team members will be done by mutual agreement based on levels of expertise put into action, levels of responsibility across the process and amount of time invested. The suggested pattern is 50% for the team members and 50% for the collective fund which will be autonomously managed in each region with guidelines that harmonize with the BI guidelines.

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