

HAPPINESS BANNERS IN SCHOOLS



Introduction

Kids to kids, a worldwide programme dedicated to fostering happiness, goodwill and friendships between children of different cultures and nationalities, is one of the major branches of *The Oneness-Heart-Tears and Smiles*, an international service organisation founded by peace visionary Sri Chinmoy 30 years ago.

The various projects that *Kids to kids* has carried out over the years are in line with the universal ideals of the United Nations, materialized in activities that fall within 5 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. In the words of Dr. C. Mercieca, President of the UN NGO International Association of Educators for World Peace, *Kids to kids* “brings the guiding principles of the United Nations in elementary school students to university students. Rather than give a lecture on equality, respect for self and others and environmental protection, the program has developed a series of projects where children participate in service programs for children.”

The Oneness-Heart-Tears and Smiles is sending artistic posters and banners with messages of happiness, hope and encouragement to institutions around the world, especially to institutions serving children, like schools and pediatric hospitals. Reading these positive affirmations, written by Sri Chinmoy, has inspired countless people who see them and reflect on them, letting these breath-sparks enter their hearts and illuminate their lives.

Five pioneer Portuguese primary and secondary schools have chosen to participate in the Happiness-Banners project, some of them having prepared ceremonies for their reception, with the participation of the different members of the community.

After receiving these inspirational messages written on the colors of the rainbow, students felt inspired to make drawings for the children and young patients at the Raisa Gorbacheva Memorial Institute of Oncology, as well as to meet in a Class Assembly, debating ideas on how to improve the life of the community, as if it were a mini assembly of the United Nations.

The initiative was reported in two Portuguese newspapers: in an online edition of "A Voz de Ermesinde" and in a printed version of the newspaper "Diário de Aveiro", with an average distribution to around 58,000 readers.

“This project created a little United Nations within the lives of our youngest citizens. I applaud this education module and endorse and encourage further activities to support the children of the international community and to develop our children in great global citizens of the world” (Dr. C. Mercieca)

Happiness-Banners in Portugal

“We all know that a rainbow is the sign of good luck and future progress. In the spiritual world, each colour of the rainbow is the harbinger of a new dawn.” ~ SRI CHINMOY ~

The Portuguese schools made its own selection from 27 aphorisms, which were printed on Happiness-Banners that the schools wanted to post so that the whole community could read and feel inspired:



Escola Secundária de Ermesinde



**Escola Básica dos 2.º e 3.º Ciclos
D. António Ferreira Gomes**



Escola Básica n.º 2 de São Bernardo (1.º Ciclo / 2.º e 3.º Ciclos)



Escola Secundária José Estêvão



Escola Básica n.º 1 de São Bernardo

Happiness-Banner Delivery Ceremonies

Ceremonies were organized for the delivery of the Happiness-Banners in two of the participating schools. These ceremonies were attended by students and teachers, as well as the Professor from

the University of Porto who contacted these schools (Simone Tomé), the president of the Parish Council (João Morgado), members of the school board, the Centre leader of the Sri Chinmoy Meditation Centre in Porto and volunteers with *The Oneness-Heart-Tears and Smiles*.

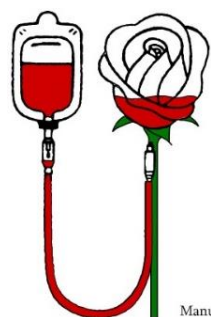


During the ceremony, students at Escola Básica dos 2.º e 3.º Ciclos D. António Ferreira Gomes, performing song, "Your Heart is as Beautiful as the Rainbow", by Sri Chinmoy.

Teacher Margarida Figueiredo stated: "As I listened to this melody, I felt as if I were rocked, enveloped in an inner peace, and felt so happy to see my students transmitting, in such a harmonious way, this message of hope that remains in our hearts. Many thanks to the humanitarian organisation for these moments."

Drawings by Children Inspired by Happiness-Banners

Students at this Escola Básica n.º 1 de São Bernardo, made drawings inspired Sri Chinmoy's aphorisms on the Happiness-Banner displayed by their school.



If you stay focused on your goals and keep faith on your heart, you will never lack strength and victory will be guaranteed

Manuel Moreira, 16, Escola Secundária de Ermesinde

Drawings for Children in Need

Even after the school year ended, there were students from the Escola Secundária de Ermesinde, who, encouraged by the Happiness-Banner messages received by their school, made drawings with their own encouraging messages to give to children who are patients at the Raisa Gorbacheva Memorial Institute of Oncology in St. Petersburg, Russia.

(*The Oneness-Heart-Tears and Smiles* organisation has provided some support to this Institute over the past two decades, and maintains an ongoing relationship with staff there.)

Comments by Teachers at Participating Schools

“Arriving at the school, it was a great moment to see it shining in all its colours and irradiating a sense of Peace und Joy. [...] From now on, by arriving at the two schools and looking at the banner, every day hundreds of youngsters and adults will be able to read the inspiring messages by Sri Chinmoy, expressing hope, peace and oneness in these times of challenges and transformation.” Dr. Simone Auf der Maur Tomé – Professor at the University of Porto, Portugal

"When the clouds shake our certainties, a breeze of strength and hope brought by Sri Chinmoy's inner peace comes to heal our hearts and souls." Helena Fonseca, Teacher at the Escola Secundária de Ermesinde

Teacher Júlia Miranda, of the Escola Secundária de Ermesinde, told us after the banners delivery ceremonies: “I felt an inner strength that made me feel that everything in life is worth it. Every day is born to present us with so many opportunities! Let us allow ourselves to be carried away by the breeze of peace and love and by the current of harmony, hope and goodness and, in this way, we build, day after day, a more fraternal and colorful world. This initiative is a hymn to solidarity and a call to the practice of well-doing.”

Teacher Conceição Vasconcelos, of the Escola Básica dos 2.º e 3.º Ciclos D. António Ferreira Gomes, said: “This banner will be an instrument for changing the school climate, by stimulating positive feelings such as joy, kindness, happiness and hope”.

Fátima Neiva, the coordinator of Escola Básica n.º 1 de São Bernardo, wrote that Sri Chinmoy's inspiring messages of hope, “provided students, in class assembly, with true moments of community. They were able to analyze and reflect on various subjects, such as: children's rights; the importance of play to our ability to grow and be happy; the importance of interaction with others; our need to dream and strive to achieve our goals; the impact that a simple smile can have on another; and the acceptance of the others, with all their differences.”

Conclusion

It is very beautiful to see how these initiatives are making children and youth feel part of a global family, fulfilling the principles of the UN in such a natural and simple way. Inspired by the aphorisms of hope of the Happiness-Banners that their schools received, they took action, drawing pictures with messages to make someone happy. This is a golden opportunity, also, for the children and young people who offer these drawings – along with their good will and encouragement – to human beings who are like them but who find themselves on the other side of the world, in totally different circumstances.

This is a story of UN values in action, as is Sri Chinmoy's legacy. His life and work are an exceptional testimony to the ideals of the United Nations. Former Under-Secretary-General Anwarul Chowdhury, stated in 2015, “This program, (Kids to Kids) is being introduced to schools to foster the ideals of the United Nations in the hearts and minds of children in various parts of the globe.”