



**Gender Equity & Reconciliation International**

*Transforming gender injustice & establishing beloved community*

# GERI Immersion & Facilitator Certification Trainings: Mid-Year Report

*Training the next generation of  
GERI facilitators and leaders*



The first half of 2024 has seen Gender Equity and Reconciliation International (GERI) advancing our mission through three simultaneous in-person *Professional Immersion and Facilitator Training* programs – conducted in India, Kenya/East Africa, and North America. All three cohorts of these comprehensive year-long trainings – totaling more than 60 trainees – have



successfully completed three intensive week-long modules, with the final Module 4 set for the coming months. In addition, a fourth Professional Facilitator Training in Spanish was conducted online for Latin America and Spain ([highlighted here in our 2023 Annual Report](#)). This training completed last October, and the new graduates are now engaged in their field internships.

### *Summary of Training Curriculum*

Each training program is uniquely tailored to its region, bringing together dedicated and sincere trainees who hold great potential for expanding GERI's work within their communities. Facilitation skills are honed on multiple levels and expanded to new depths, with special emphasis on the complex nexus of gender conditioning, spirituality, and sexuality. The curriculum is balanced with additional experiential practices, including Grof® Breathwork, TRE® (Trauma Releasing Exercises), shadow work, and refining our understanding of intimacy through safe and gentle touch. These sessions, together with presentations on sexuality and spirituality with group discussions, deepen self-awareness and build mutual trust among the trainees, as they develop facilitation skills together.

Monthly one-on-one mentoring sessions are provided to each trainee, and online group meetings are held periodically between the training modules. This additional support is provided by the international team of 17 GERI Trainers for the in-person GERI training program, who come from Australia, Costa Rica, India, Kenya, South Africa, Venezuela, the UK, and the United States. These trainers are: Desireé English (Director of GERI Training), Garrett Evans, Ansar Anwar, Silvia Araya-Fischer, Tristan Johannes, Esther Diplock, William Diplock, Michele Breene, Myra Kinds, Julien Devereux, Vijaya Lakshmi, Hugo Sanchez, Karambu Ringera, Jabu Mashinini, Shivaprasad Kumarswamy, Cynthia Brix, and William Keepin.

The training curriculum also weaves in key elements of intersectionality and diversity, with a particular focus on LGBTQ+ and BIPOC communities. The leaders of GERI's LGBTQ+ program – Tristan Johannes, Laurie Gaum, and others – give focused sessions to highlight the unique needs and issues within LGBTQ+ communities. Similarly, our BIPOC program leader – Myra Kinds – facilitates sessions to highlight

the intersections of race and gender, and the needs of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) communities. Our BIPOC and LGBTQ+ programs are continuing to grow in inspiring ways, as summarized in our forthcoming GERI newsletter.

The remainder of this report focuses on recent immersive trainings in 2024, which have been marked by powerful storytelling, profound personal transformations, and the development of essential facilitation skills. From the diverse cultural landscapes of India, to the serene eco-spiritual center in Kenya, to the rolling hills of northern California, these intensive trainings have not only fostered remarkable transformative learning, but have also nurtured a deep connection to spirit and community.

Read on for a closer look at the key highlights and transformative moments from each training location as we celebrate the journey of our trainees toward becoming certified GERI Facilitators.

## North America

*There's a continuing deep sense of sacredness I now embody which wasn't there before. ... Each day I start with the calling 'How do I want to be in the world today?' My purpose has changed from 'what do i want to do' to 'How do I want to be'.*



~ Female Trainee, North America

The North American training cohort reconvened for Module 3 in northern California, April 5 - 11. This wonderfully diverse group includes trainees from the United States, Canada, Australia, Italy, Argentina, Costa Rica, and

South Korea. We were greeted by blankets of snow which soon melted, revealing vibrant green hills, tulips, and daffodils at the Ananda Village Retreat Center. The hosts were warm and welcoming, which supported the trainees to immerse themselves in the intensive curriculum.



Module 3 is dedicated to honing facilitation skills in collaborative gender-balanced teams. Small groups of trainees facilitate the rest of the group in carefully designed practicums, with peer feedback and focused evaluation at every step.

Peer feedback is an essential component throughout the training, imparting skillful practices for giving and receiving feedback. Silent contemplative meditation was woven into each day, along with movement practices including qigong, yoga, dance, and nature walks.



We had a full day of Grof® Breathwork during the solar eclipse, a day of collective awe and reflection. As one trainee, described her transformative experience:

*"I felt a big change of energy within me and around me following our breathwork day. ... There's a continuing deep sense of sacredness I now embody which wasn't there before."*

*I have such a deeper spiritual understanding of myself and the GERI work which will have a continuing impact on myself, my relationships, and how I bring myself into the GERI work.”*

*~ Female participant, North America Training*

The men’s outdoor ceremony to honor the women was particularly moving. The men created an elegant shrine circle made of branches, pine cones, and flowers, which they designated as the Circle of Feminine Sovereignty. Each woman was invited to step into the circle, one at a time—and the men offered heartfelt words and symbolic gestures to honor her unique strengths, wisdom, and contributions (see photo).



The women followed suit with their own beautiful ceremony, inviting the men to wear eye shades (if they chose), and leading them through a series of sensual experiences of nature, including gentle touch and insightful personal affirmations of their unique qualities and gifts (see photo). Both ceremonies were a moving testament to the deep mutual respect and admiration across the gender divide, fostering a profound sense of connection and mutual respect.



This GERI tradition of mutual cross-gender honoring ceremonies strengthens the bonds within the community, and enriches the transformative experience for everyone in the community. These ceremonies are adapted in our LGBTQ+ programs to honor the spectrum of gender diversity within the group, which maintains the inspiring validation and affirmation of each person in the group. They are sometimes adapted in other ways; for example, to honor the unique gifts of spirituality

and sexuality, or to appropriately mirror the spiritual identities and affinities within a given GERI group.

Gift-giving was another training highlight, a practice that went beyond physical presents. Trainees offered one another special gifts: heartfelt words of



encouragement, loving hugs, and small tokens of appreciation. The atmosphere was one of genuine affection, welcoming eye contact, caring touches, and a strong sense of vibrant community. Each gesture, no matter how small, contributed to a nurturing environment where everyone felt valued and supported. By the end, the trainees felt they had become a beloved community, bound by shared growth and understanding.

## India

*I am able to understand myself better by opening to my vulnerability. This gender work has offered me a space to understand not only myself, but also the other gender and humans. I feel privileged for being introduced to this work at this age, which has enabled me to reflect more deeply on how best to give back to the work both personally and professionally*



~ Female Trainee, India

The GERI India Training cohort completed their third module in Bangalore, March 5 - 11. While the first two modules immerse trainees in their personal stories



of gender-based challenges and healing, as well as inner explorations around sexuality and spirituality—in the third module, trainees dive headlong into facilitating the GERI processes with and for one another.

Engaging in the planning and execution of each GERI activity, trainees develop not only crucial facilitation skills, but also the more subtle and sensitive skills of holding space for one another. The



process opened an authentic space of heartfelt truth-telling, coupled with compassionate presence and the mysterious grace of loving witness in community. This gave trainees the unique and crucial experience of the intricate dance of a GERI facilitator – moving between the role of group *facilitator*, guiding and holding space for others; and *participant*, requiring them to engage deeply with their own personal stories (without ever losing their ‘facilitator hat’). This is a crucial skill set for GERI facilitators as they learn to lead others through this intensive transformative journey.

The Truth Forums facilitated by the trainees were particularly powerful, drawing forth the courage to share deeply personal stories of challenge and pain in relation to gender and sexuality. These narratives are often intertwined with the complexities of caste and religion, illuminating the profound intersections of identity and societal strata in India. As participants bravely navigated these sensitive topics, the honoring ceremonies that evolved from this module were deeply moving.



The trainees allowed themselves to



sink in to the deeper purpose of the ceremonies, leaning into a beautiful simplicity, sincerity, and spontaneity as they intimately expressed their blessings and prayers for the other gender group. The men's ceremony included offering gentle and sensitive

head massages, bringing several women to tears with the care and sincerity of their nurturing touch. Similarly, the women's ceremony radiated with authenticity and deep connection, as they individually honored each man for his unique qualities and contributions.

The diverse backgrounds of the 18 trainees—hailing from across India including Hyderabad, Bangalore, Pune, and Koppala—has enriched the training experience, bringing different perspectives and insights to the group. As the trainees explore and grapple deeply with gender, sexuality, and intersectionality, their unique individual contributions help to reveal a more complete picture of their commitment to the GERI mission.



With Module 3 completed, some trainees have already begun their internship phase. Several trainees are organizing and co-facilitating introductory events online, and serving as intern facilitators at workshops across India. We look forward to completing Module 4 and welcoming this promising cohort of trainees into the next stage of their training as GERI facilitators.



*India Module 3 Training Team Ansar Anwar, Desireé English, Garrett Evans, Vijaya Lakshmi, and Mangesh Pol*



# Kenya and East Africa

*"I've learned that through my own sharing and vulnerability – my own voice – I can support and provide space for someone*



*else to also speak out the truth from deep in their heart. Throughout this whole process I am transforming myself, connecting with my spirituality, and re-grounding myself in my purpose."*

~ Male Trainee, Kenya

In the heart of Meru, Kenya, at Tiriji Eco and Spiritual Center, we completed our Module 3 training, May 28 - June 2.



The 25 dedicated trainees come from Kenya, Malawi, and Egypt. The week was filled with moments of profound connection, learning, and personal growth, set against the backdrop of a lush green garden and rolling hills on the slopes of Mt Kenya. Tiriji's garden uses a permaculture and water retention design, with a mix of fruit trees, medicinal plants, flowers, and garden vegetables.



The meeting space for the Kenya training is a large two-story circular gazebo with floor to ceiling glass windows, designed by GERI Trainer Karambu Ringera. It was

heartwarming to see the trainees deeply engaged in their co-facilitation pairs and teams, diligently preparing for their roles. Each morning, the gazebo training space was a refreshing

sight, carefully adorned with fresh flowers and creative decorations prepared by the trainees for each day.

The training days were filled with hands-on practice sessions as trainees embraced the deeper layers of the GERI process. The transition from careful planning to spontaneous and heartfelt unveiling of personal stories was a testament to their growing skills. Watching them guide and embrace each other in poignant interactions—as they navigate the unplanned sorrows, joys, tears, and breakthroughs—highlighted the subtle yet powerful facilitation skills they are acquiring in these profound moments of truth and reconciliation that characterize the GERI work.



This sense of unity was palpable, especially during the honoring ceremonies. The women's ceremony brought joy and delight, with affirming words, a fresh bouquet of flowers, and a beautifully orchestrated slide show honoring each man individually. Meanwhile, the men made an individualized paper butterfly for each woman, with personalized messages from each man. These butterflies were symbolically "flown" to 'land' on each woman.



In a remarkable synchronicity after the ceremony, *real* butterflies – which

traditionally represent "transformation, rebirth, and spiritual metamorphosis" – began to show up in much greater numbers than usual all around Tiriji—in the meeting space, dining hall, and bedrooms!



*Kenya Module 3 Training Team Garrett Evans, Desireé English, Ansar Anwar, and Myra Kinds*

## The remarkable inspiration of these 80 new trainees

Moving into Module 4 in August and September, we look forward to these 3 cohorts of new GERI trainees as they complete their initial training, and then begin their internships. Already, several trainees have begun their internship process, co-leading and helping to organize various introductory sessions, online courses, and in-person workshops. We are inspired by the ever expanding capacity and diversity of GERI facilitators around the world.

In closing, a key lesson from the GERI work on six continents over 32 years is that the entire human race is tormented by the systemic affliction of gender and sexual injustice. The symptoms differ across cultures, but the injurious dysfunction is fundamentally the same—everywhere.

Witnessing the skillful work of these newest 80 budding GERI facilitators in our four concurrent trainings—as they facilitate deep transformative healing of gender and sexual injustice in their communities—is a profound inspiration for us. We are truly gratified with the progress and dedication of these new trainees, and it further reinforces our conviction, yet again, that

gender oppression and sexual injustice are *not* inevitable in human societies. The universal gender crisis is a human invention, and it can be eradicated by human *intervention*. We just need to keep confronting these challenges head-on in community, and work skillfully to transmute them in the deep collective alchemy of the human spirit.

May we all continue in this work of transformation, rebirth, and spiritual metamorphosis! It is our birthright to live in a fully gender-healed world, and GERI communities worldwide are living into this dream today.



Your support is deeply appreciated and make this work possible.

We warmly welcome your tax-deductible donation to our 501(c)3 educational non-profit. Just click the donate button below!



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