

TEACHING TOLERANCE & HBO DOCUMENTARY FILMS

# SERGIO

A TEACHER'S GUIDE WITH  
STANDARDS-BASED LESSONS  
GRADES 7 AND UP

Produced by Teaching Tolerance, a Project of the Southern Poverty Law Center, in Partnership with Home Box Office and Silverbridge Productions.

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TEACHING  
TOLERANCE 

A PROJECT OF THE SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER

AP PHOTO/FIRDIA LISNAWATI



## Contents

Introduction .....	3
Theme 1: Service to Others.....	4
Theme 2: Bridging Cultural Gaps.....	6
Theme 3: Human Rights .....	8
Recommended Resources & Acknowledgements .....	10
Content Standards & Benchmarks .....	11
Handout 1: World Service Organizations .....	13
Handout 2: Map Skills .....	14
Handout 3: Sergio Vieira de Mello’s Life’s Work .....	15
Handout 4: A Life of Service .....	16
Handout 5: My Service Project .....	17
Handout 6: What Is Culture? .....	18
Handout 7: Comparing Cultures .....	19
Handout 8: Bridging Cultural Gaps.....	20
Handout 9: Chasing the Flame .....	21
Handout 10: Chasing the Flame: Questions for Discussion .....	22
Handout 11: A Life in Pictures .....	23
Handout 12: Quotes About Human Dignity.....	25
Handout 13: Director’s Statement .....	26

ON THE COVER: (SERGIO) AP PHOTO/UNITED NATIONS, EVAN SCHNEIDE; (SERGIO AND PRESIDENT GUSMAO) AP PHOTO/FIRDIA LISNAWATI; (UN FLAG) AP PHOTO/MARY ALTAFFER; (HOTEL BOMBING) GETTY IMAGES/SABAH ARAR

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## Introduction

This teacher's guide is designed to support and supplement the HBO documentary *Sergio*, based on the life and tragic death of United Nations diplomat Sergio Vieira de Mello. Vieira de Mello was a Brazilian humanitarian who served the UN for more than 30 years in a variety of roles all around the world. He was killed in a hotel bombing in Iraq in 2003. The film *Sergio* chronicles his extraordinary life and untimely death through the eyes of those closest to him.

The classroom activities outlined below are intended to provide different lenses through which students can view the documentary. Students are encouraged to listen, speak, read, and write to demonstrate their understanding of the film. Below you will find activities structured around three different themes: service to others, bridging cultural gaps, and human rights.

## THEME ONE

# Service to Others

**Overview:** This set of classroom activities revolves around the theme of service. Sergio Vieira de Mello, through his extensive career with the United Nations, devoted his life to the service of others.

The activities relating to this theme encourage students to examine (1) what it means to be in service to others and how Vieira de Mello exemplified this idea; (2) why service is important; and (3) how students can make a difference in the world through living a life of service.

## Some Overarching Objectives

- Students will be able to locate places on a map.
- Students will be able to define the main features of various kinds of government (democracy, monarchy, etc.).
- Students will be able to analyze different types of service organizations (including the United Nations).

## Essential Questions

- Do we have a responsibility to help other people?
- What does it mean to be in service to others?
- How can service change the world?

## BEFORE THE FILM

**Speak>>** Record the following statements on the board. Take a class poll to see how many of your classmates agree or disagree with each statement.

- We should take care of those who can't take care of themselves.
- It's every man/woman for himself/herself.
- You should always mind your own business.
- Never let the strong prey on the weak.

**Listen>>** Listen carefully as the following is read aloud:

Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, "An individual has not started living until he can rise above the narrow confines of his individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity."

In small groups, analyze this statement. Do you agree that it is more important to put humanity's concerns above your own? Why or why not?

**Read>>** Explore some common types of service organizations through *World Service Organizations (Handout 1)*.

**Write>>** Use the following sentence starter to write a journal entry about the idea of service to humanity:

To be in service to others means to \_\_\_\_\_

## DURING THE FILM

**Listen>>** As you watch the film, listen for mentions of various forms of government (democracy, monarchy, etc.) and make a list of the different types you hear. Then, after viewing the film, look up the following government systems online with a partner:

- Democracy
- Dictatorship
- Military dictatorship
- Communism
- Monarchy

**Speak>>** During a break in the middle of the documentary, take a moment to turn and talk to a partner. Use the following questions to guide your conversation:

- What do you think motivated Sergio Vieira de Mello to travel all over the world doing this type of work?
- If you had to list the top five words that might describe Vieira de Mello, what would they be?

**Read>>** Pause the film at any point when an unfamiliar place is mentioned. Use *Map Skills (Handout 2)* to learn how to locate places on a map. Then use your map skills to find the unfamiliar place.

**Write>>** As you watch *Sergio*, make a list of all of the ways in which Sergio Vieira de Mello served the United Nations and the various countries with which he worked. Then compare your list to the timeline on *Sergio Vieira de Mello's Life's Work (Handout 3)* that outlines Vieira de Mello's career.

### AFTER THE FILM

**Listen>>** In small groups, evaluate how you think service affects others. Assign each group one of the following names: Sergio Vieira de Mello, William Von Zehle, Peter Galbraith, Andre Valentine. In your group, take turns analyzing how that person's service to others made a great impact. Take notes on large chart paper as you listen to each person's analysis. Then share your notes with the rest of the class by hanging your chart paper around the room. As a class, discuss the following question: would you be able to provide the kind of service that these individuals did? Why or why not?

**Read>>** There are many ways to be in service to others. Read *A Life of Service (Handout 4)* and respond to a poem about what it means to be "in service to others."

**Write>>** Brainstorm a few ways for you to be in service to others in your home, school or community. Then create an outline that shows how you will accomplish your service goal. Use *My Service Project (Handout 5)* to help you.

**Speak>>** While Sergio Vieira de Mello's choice to serve others greatly impacted the world at large, some may argue that it took a toll on his personal life. For instance, he was away from his children for much of their lives. In small groups, analyze the possible impact of service on one's personal relationships. Use the following questions to help guide your discussion:

- What different choices could Sergio Vieira de Mello have made to serve others and yet still be a good father?
- Do you think he might have had regrets in his final moments?

## THEME TWO

# Bridging Cultural Gaps

**Overview:** This set of classroom activities revolves around the theme of bridging cultural gaps. Sergio Vieira de Mello is a great example of a person who was able to connect with many different people from many different cultures.

The activities relating to this theme encourage students to examine (1) what constitutes the building blocks of any culture; (2) how, through respect for others, one can understand the values of another culture; (3) how valuing another culture can aid in conflict resolution; and (4) why it is important to bridge cultural gaps in everyday life.

### Some Overarching Objectives

- Students will be able to define the main features of culture (religion, food, clothing, etc.).
- Students will be able to compare and contrast elements of various cultures.

### Essential Questions

- What are some of the reasons for gaps between cultures?
- How does respecting another culture aid in solving conflicts?
- How critical is establishing a dialogue in bridging cultural gaps?

### BEFORE THE FILM

**Listen>>** Turn on a radio and tune in to any station. Listen carefully to the first three songs you hear. What messages do you hear in each song? What does each song tell you about American culture? Discuss your responses to these questions in small groups.

**Read>>** Read about some common aspects of culture on *What Is Culture? (Handout 6)*.

**Speak>>** With a partner, discuss the religion, food, clothing, and governments of any two cultures. Then use *Comparing Cultures (Handout 7)* to help you create a Venn diagram comparing and contrasting those cultures.

**Write>>** Think about a time when you had a conflict with someone over a difference. Write a letter to that person describing your point of view.

### DURING THE FILM

**Speak>>** Pause the film at any point and take part in a quick **Think-Pair-Share** activity with a partner. First, **think** about what skills might be required in order to travel around the world working with others. Next, **pair up** with a classmate to discuss your ideas and record a combined list of skills you feel would be necessary to travel and work with others. Finally, **share** your lists with the rest of the class.

**Read>>** Sergio Vieira de Mello, like others who work with people from many different cultures, had to be an expert in problem solving and in resolving conflicts. Read about Vieira de Mello's philosophy on working with others on *Bridging Cultural Gaps (Handout 8)*.

**Listen>>** The film depicts several instances of Sergio Vieira de Mello engaged in conflict resolution. Listen as the following excerpts from the film are read aloud.

(*Note to teacher:* You may wish to choose two students to come up to the front of the room to read aloud.)

**Mieke Bos:** "Sergio never underestimated, of course, who he was dealing with and what their historical baggage was, but that did not cause him to think that he shouldn't talk to them."

**Mona Rishmawi:** "The first thing he wanted to do was to listen. He went to Basra, Mosel, Erbil,

all over, all over. He was very attentive to how normal Iraqis were living day by day. Water, electricity. He saw it very much as a question of human dignity.”

Use the following prompt to analyze the quotes above: What does it mean to talk with the enemy? Why is it important to have dialogue with people, even when they disagree with you?

**Write>>** Imagine that you are a film critic living somewhere outside of the United States. Take notes as you watch the film in preparation to write a movie review of the documentary *Sergio*.

### AFTER THE FILM

**Read>>** Read a portion of the book *Sergio: One Man’s Fight to Save the World* by Samantha Powers (previously titled *Chasing the Flame: Sergio Vieira de Mello and the Fight to Save the World*) on *Chasing the Flame (Handout 9)*. Then answer the questions that appear on *Chasing the Flame: Questions for Discussion (Handout 10)*.

**Listen>>** Listen as the following excerpts are read aloud. Then answer the questions that follow.

(*Note to teacher:* You may wish to choose two students to come up to the front of the room to read aloud.)

**Excerpt 1:** Sergio Vieira de Mello: “We see our role as one that supports the Iraqis to replace, as soon as possible, the Coalition and recover fully their sovereignty. No one likes to be under occupation and I often ask myself, how would I feel if I saw foreign tanks in the streets of Rio de Janeiro, my hometown. I wouldn’t like it and I would want that to come to an end very very quickly, and I would have wanted it not to happen in the first place.”

**Question 1:** Do you believe Sergio Vieira de Mello understood how to bridge cultural gaps? Why or why not?

**Excerpt 2:** Andre Valentine: “He failed me, he really failed me. I really believed God sent two miracles. Bill and myself. We were his angels and he failed both of us. And it hurt real bad. I’m mad at him, but I’m also hurt for him. Because he didn’t believe in me. He didn’t believe in a miracle. We only asked him to stay alive. Have the will to survive! Have the faith to survive, and he didn’t want to.”

**Question 2:** Do you think Andre Valentine is making a judgment on Sergio Vieira de Mello’s will to live? Do you think his feelings above are warranted? Do you think one can ever separate one’s own beliefs from one’s actions? Elaborate.

**Speak>>** Take a look at the pictures of Sergio Vieira de Mello on *A Life in Pictures (Handout 11)*. With a partner, use these photographs to make inferences about how Vieira de Mello helped to bridge cultural gaps.

#### Contextual background for photographs:

**Picture 1:** Sergio and Senior Political Advisor, Ghassan Salame, meet with Iraqi Shia religious leaders, summer 2003

**Picture 2:** *UNHCR photograph.* Sergio in Mozambique, 1977

**Picture 3:** *Mieke Bos photograph.* Sergio observes the Cambodian repatriation effort. Exiled refugee Cambodians board buses to return home, 1992

**Picture 4:** *Mieke Bos photograph.* Sergio and his UN team cross into Cambodia on their way to meet with the Khmer Rouge, 1992

**Write>>** The film includes an interview with Nesri Tehayneh, associate of Jordanian terrorist Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. Here is an excerpt from that interview:

**Nesri Tehayneh, Close Associate of Jordanian terrorist Abu Musab al-Zarqawi (subtitled):** “The

UN is ruled by Jews and the Americans and its crimes are flagrant in the Arab and Islamic world. Zaraqawi told me he needed to hit a big target—to recruit followers. Zaraqawi said that the UN was a nest for secret services and American spies. He said he needed to attack the UN and kill that criminal Sergio.”

Choose one of the following prompts and write a journal entry:

- Why do you think this interview was included in the documentary?
- What do you think Sergio Vieira de Mello would have said to Zaraqawi had he known about the planned attack?

### THEME THREE

## Human Rights

**Overview:** This set of classroom activities revolves around the theme of human rights. The documentary *Sergio* presents several human rights issues from around the world (Bangladesh, East Timor, Iraq, etc.).

The activities relating to this theme encourage students to: (1) understand the idea of human rights and dignity; (2) examine some past and current human rights violations (as presented in the documentary); and (3) explore options for how they can get involved to help effect a change in their schools, in their communities, and in the world.

#### Overarching Objectives

- Students will be able to outline basic human rights (food, clothing, shelter, etc.).
- Students will be able to analyze past and present human rights violations around the world.

#### Essential Questions

- What are human rights?
- What role should government play in upholding human rights?
- How can we support human rights around the world?

### BEFORE THE FILM

**Listen>>** Listen to a short description of human rights as defined by the Merriam-Webster dictionary. As you listen, jot down the words that stand out the most for you.

**Human rights:** (*n*) rights (as freedom from unlawful imprisonment, torture, and execution) regarded as belonging fundamentally to all persons

Now, in a small group, combine all of your ideas on a poster-sized piece of paper. Hang the posters around the room and share your work with the rest of the class.

**Write>>** With a partner, look up the word *dignity* in either printed or online dictionaries. Then in your journal, write your own brief definition of the word *dignity*. What do you think it means to live with dignity?

**Read>>** Read some famous quotes about living with dignity on *Quotes about Human Dignity (Handout 12)*. As you read, highlight the key words and phrases that stand out the most for you. Pair up with a classmate and discuss the quotes that are most meaningful for you.

**Speak>>** Form groups of four and collaborate to come up with a list of what you would consider to be basic human rights. Create a poster that displays your ideas.



**DURING THE FILM**

**Listen>>** There are several human rights issues brought up during the film *Sergio*. As you watch the documentary, make a list of these issues. Try to record as many notes about each issue as you can.

*(Note to teacher: If students struggle with identifying some of the human rights issues, draw their attention to the following parts of the film: Vieira de Mello working to provide food and shelter to the people of Bangladesh; the people of East Timor struggling to overcome years of war and genocide; Vieira de Mello talking to Iraqis in the street about their living conditions.)*

**Speak>>** Pause the film at one of the moments when a human rights issue is discussed. With a partner, discuss the issue as it is presented. Create a **KWL (know, want to know, learned)** chart to help guide your discussion. Draw three columns on a sheet of paper with the following headers: What do we already **know** about this human rights issue? What do we **want to know** about this human rights issue? What have we **learned** about this human rights issue?

**Read>>** Pause the film at any point. Read the *Director's Statement (Handout 13)*. Then put the director's statements into your own words to show your understanding.

**Write>>** As you watch the film, record your thoughts about at least three quotes from Sergio Vieira de Mello. Create a two-column table on a sheet of paper. In the left column, write the quote. In the right column, write your thoughts or feelings about the quote.

**AFTER THE FILM**

**Read>>** Go to [www.hrw.org](http://www.hrw.org) to read about current human rights issues around the world.

**Speak>>** In small groups, create a campaign that helps get your school involved in helping to address one human rights issue. You might want to consider one of the following ideas: Hold a fundraiser to collect donations for your issue; give a speech about your issue at a school assembly; create posters to hang up around your school to help raise awareness about your issue.

**Listen>>** Replay the last few minutes of the film (when Larriera talks about returning to Brazil). Write a poem that captures how you interpret Sergio Vieira de Mello's connection with others.

**Write>>** Write a letter to Sergio Vieira de Mello from the point of view of someone living in one of the countries where he worked so tirelessly for human rights, particularly in Bangladesh, East Timor or Iraq.

## Recommended Resources

For more information about the United Nations, please visit the official website at [www.un.org](http://www.un.org).

For specific information about human rights issues presented in the film, please visit the United Nations Human Rights Website: [www.ohchr.org](http://www.ohchr.org)

To learn more about the life and work of Sergio Vieira de Mello, please visit the Sergio Vieira de Mello Foundation: [www.sergiovdmfoundation.org/wcms/index.php?lang=en](http://www.sergiovdmfoundation.org/wcms/index.php?lang=en)

The documentary *Sergio* draws from Samantha Power's book: *Sergio: One Man's Fight to Save the World* (Penguin Books)

Here is an article written by Samantha Power about Sergio Vieira de Mello that was published in The New Yorker: [www.newyorker.com/reporting/2008/01/07/080107fa\\_fact\\_power](http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2008/01/07/080107fa_fact_power).

To learn more about Sergio Vieira de Mello's life and death, consider reading his BBC News obituary: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/2146395.stm>.

For more recommended resources, please visit the documentary's website: [www.sergiothemovie.com/the-mission](http://www.sergiothemovie.com/the-mission) and [www.sergiothemovie.com/the-mission/united-nations](http://www.sergiothemovie.com/the-mission/united-nations).

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## Standards

The standards and benchmarks in this guide are drawn from Content Knowledge: A Compendium of K-12 Standards, 4th edition, available through Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning ([www.mcrel.org/standards-benchmarks](http://www.mcrel.org/standards-benchmarks)). *Copyright © 1995 - 2009 McREL.*

### Behavioral Studies

**Standard 2:** Understands various meanings of social group, general implications of group membership, and different ways that groups function

#### Grades 9-12

**Benchmark 5:** Understands that social groups may have patterns of behavior, values, beliefs, and attitudes that can help or hinder cross-cultural understanding.

**Standard 4:** Understands conflict, cooperation, and interdependence among individuals, groups, and institutions

#### Grades 9-12

**Benchmark 1:** Understands that conflict between people or groups may arise from competition over ideas, resources, power, and/or status civics.

### Language Arts

**Standard 1:** Uses the general skills and strategies of the writing process

#### Grades 9-12

**Benchmark 5:** Uses strategies to address writing to different audiences (e.g., includes explanations and definitions according to the audience's background, age, or knowledge of the topic, adjusts formality of style, considers interests of potential readers).

**Standard 2:** Uses the stylistic and rhetorical aspects of writing

#### Grades 9-12

**Benchmark 1:** Uses precise and descriptive language that clarifies and enhances ideas and supports different purposes (e.g., to stimulate the imagination of the reader, to translate concepts into simpler or more easily understood terms, to achieve a specific tone, to explain concepts in literature).

**Standard 4:** Gathers and uses information for research purposes

#### Grades 9-12

**Benchmark 1:** Uses appropriate research methodology (e.g., formulates questions and refines topics, develops a plan for research; organizes what is known about a topic; uses appropriate research methods, such as questionnaires, experiments, field studies; collects information to narrow and develop a topic and support a thesis).

**Benchmark 5:** Synthesizes information from multiple research studies to draw conclusions that go beyond those found in any of the individual studies.

**Benchmark 6:** Uses systematic strategies (e.g., anecdotal scripting, annotated bibliographies, graphics, conceptual maps, learning logs, notes, outlines) to organize and record information.

**Standard 6:** Uses reading skills and strategies to understand and interpret a variety of literary texts

#### Grades 9-12

**Benchmark 1:** Uses reading skills and strategies to understand a variety of literary texts (e.g., fiction, nonfiction, myths, poems).

**Standard 7:** Uses reading skills and strategies to understand and interpret a variety of informational texts

#### Grades 9-12

**Benchmark 3:** Summarizes and paraphrases complex, implicit hierarchic structures in informational texts, including the relationships among the concepts and details in those structures.

**Benchmark 5:** Uses text features and elements to support inferences and generalizations

about information (e.g., vocabulary, structure, evidence, expository structure, format, use of language, arguments used).

**Standard 8:** Uses listening and speaking strategies for different purposes

**Grades 9-12**

**Benchmark 2:** Asks questions as a way to broaden and enrich classroom discussions.

**Benchmark 4:** Adjusts message wording and delivery to particular audiences and for particular purposes (e.g., to defend a position, to entertain, to inform, to persuade).

**Benchmark 5:** Makes formal presentations to the class.

**Benchmark 6:** Makes multimedia presentations using text, images, and sound.

**Benchmark 7:** Uses a variety of verbal and nonverbal techniques for presentations and demonstrates poise and self-control while presenting.

**Benchmark 8:** Responds to questions and feedback about own presentations (e.g., clarifies and defends ideas, expands on a topic, uses logical arguments, modifies organization, evaluates effectiveness, sets goals for future presentations).

**Standard 9:** Uses viewing skills and strategies to understand and interpret visual media

**Grades 9-12**

**Benchmark 1:** Uses a range of strategies to interpret visual media (e.g., draws conclusions, makes generalizations, synthesizes materials viewed, refers to images or information in visual media to support point of view, deconstructs media to determine the main idea).

**Life Skills: Working in Groups**

**Standard 1:** Contributes to overall effort of group

**Grades K-12**

**Benchmark 2:** Works cooperatively within a group to complete tasks, achieve goals, and solve problems.

**Benchmark 5:** Identifies and uses the individual strengths and interests of others to accomplish team goals.

**Benchmark 7:** Helps the group establish goals, taking personal responsibility for accomplishing such goals.

**Standard 3:** Works well with diverse individuals and in diverse situations

**Grades K-12**

**Benchmark 1:** Works well with those of the opposite gender, of differing abilities, and from different age groups.

**Benchmark 2:** Works well with those from different ethnic groups, of different religious orientations, and of cultures different from their own.

**Historical Understanding**

**Standard 2:** Understands the historical perspective

**Grades 9-12**

**Benchmark 1:** Analyzes the values held by specific people who influenced history and the role their values played in influencing history.

**Benchmark 2:** Analyzes the influences specific ideas and beliefs had on a period of history and specifies how events might have been different in the absence of those ideas and beliefs.

**Benchmark 3:** Analyzes the effects that specific “chance events” had on history and specifies how things might have been different in the absence of those events.

**Benchmark 4:** Analyzes the effects specific decisions had on history and studies how things might have been different in the absence of those decisions.

# Sergio • Handout 1

## World Service Organizations

Read the following service organization descriptions. As you read, underline key words and phrases. Then explore each organization's Website online and complete the last column in the table.

Organization	Description	Website	Notes About the Organization
United Nations	The United Nations is a collection of countries around the world that work together in the hopes of achieving world peace.	<a href="http://www.un.org">www.un.org</a>	Purpose:  Leader:  Current Projects:
Amnesty International	Amnesty International is an organization devoted to ending human rights violations everywhere.	<a href="http://www.amnesty.org">www.amnesty.org</a>	Purpose:  Leader:  Current Projects:
Human Rights Watch	Human Rights Watch is an organization that works to promote human rights around the world.	<a href="http://www.hrw.org">www.hrw.org</a>	Purpose:  Leader:  Current Projects:
World Health Organization	The World Health Organization is part of the United Nations. It serves as a voice in all health matters that affect the world.	<a href="http://www.who.int">www.who.int</a>	Purpose:  Leader:  Current Projects:

# Sergio • Handout 2

## Map Skills

Read the key terms below to learn about how to find a place on a printed map.

### MAP OF EAST TIMOR

**TITLE** Use the title to help give you context for the map as a whole.



**LEGEND** The legend explains how to read the different symbols on the map.

**COMPASS** Some maps include a compass that shows general direction (north, south, east and west).

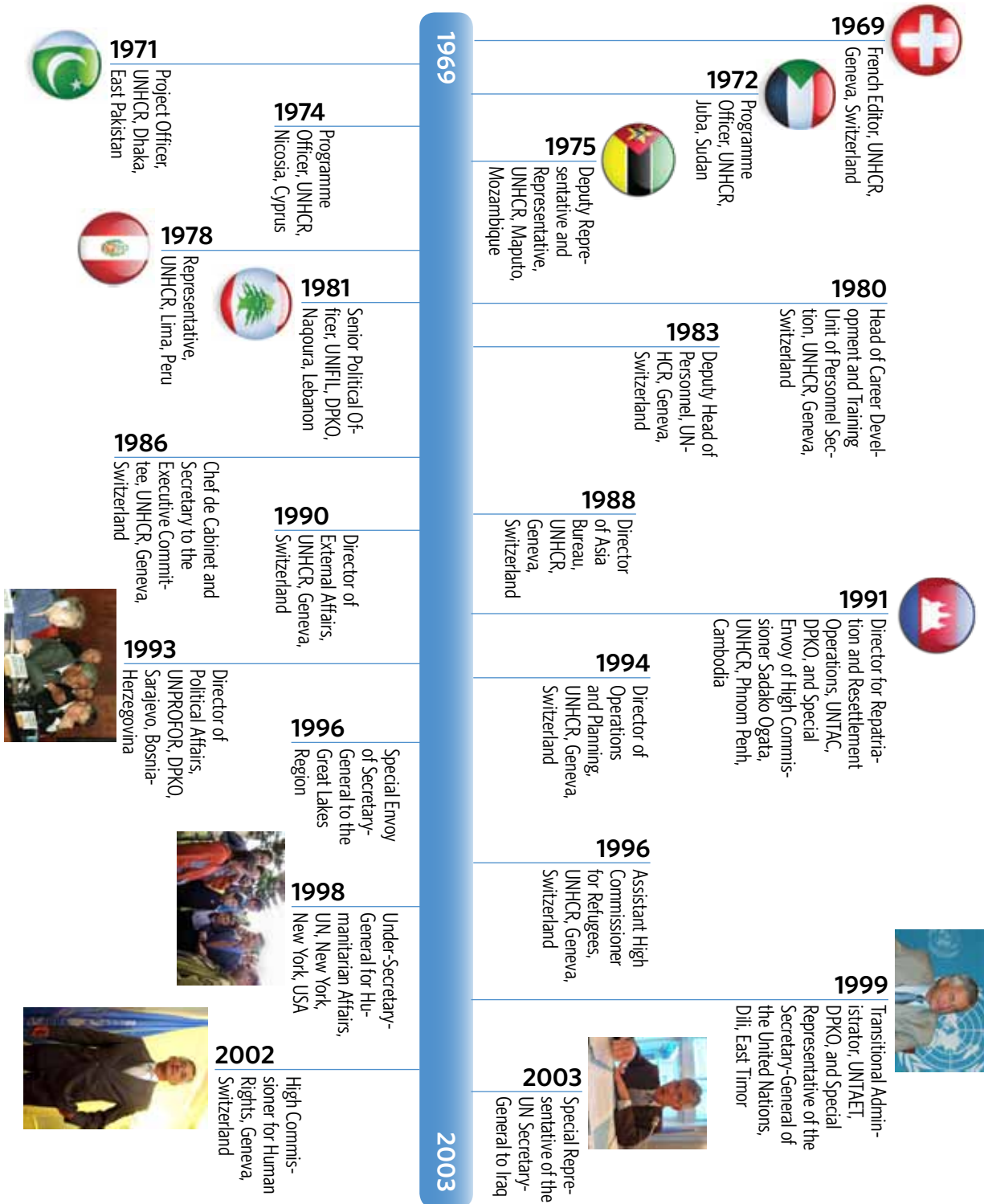
**SCALE** The scale shows the accurate measurements that a map represents.

Source [tinyurl.com/25qmb06](http://tinyurl.com/25qmb06)

# Sergio • Handout 3

Sergio Vieira de Mello's Life's Work

Read the timeline below. Highlight the parts of the timeline that are mentioned in the film Sergio



source: [tinyurl.com/2bhvv3w](http://tinyurl.com/2bhvv3w)

(COUNTRY FLAGS) ISTOCKPHOTO.COM; (1993) AP PHOTO/DONALD STAMPFLI; (1998) AP PHOTO/POOL/SRDJAN SUKI; (1999) SERGIOVDMFOUNDATION.ORG; (2002) AP PHOTO/KEYSTONE/LAURENT GILLIERON; (2003) AP PHOTO/ALI HAIDER





# Sergio • Handout 5

## My Service Project

Use the guide below to help you plan your own service project.

### Step 1

Choose a service project! Use the following questions to help you brainstorm ideas:

- What do you care deeply about? What are your talents?
- What needs do you see in your school community, in your town, or in the world?

Record your idea for a service project here:

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### Step 2

Set a goal! Remember to set a goal that is reasonable and achievable. Consider the following points:

- What is an appropriate time frame for your service project?
- What is a good end date?

Record goals for your service project here:

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### Step 3

Make a plan! Create a timeline that outlines each step of your plan. Remember to include dates!

Record a plan for your service project here:

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### Step 4

Get others involved! The best way to ensure your project's success is to get help! Consider the following points:

- Who can help me with this project?
- How can I promote awareness about this project in my community?

Record ideas for getting others involved in your service project here:

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### Step 5

Get started! To begin your service project, choose one small first step. Consider the following points:

- What is one little thing that can get your project underway?
- What can you do today, tomorrow, or this week?

Record the first step of your service project here:

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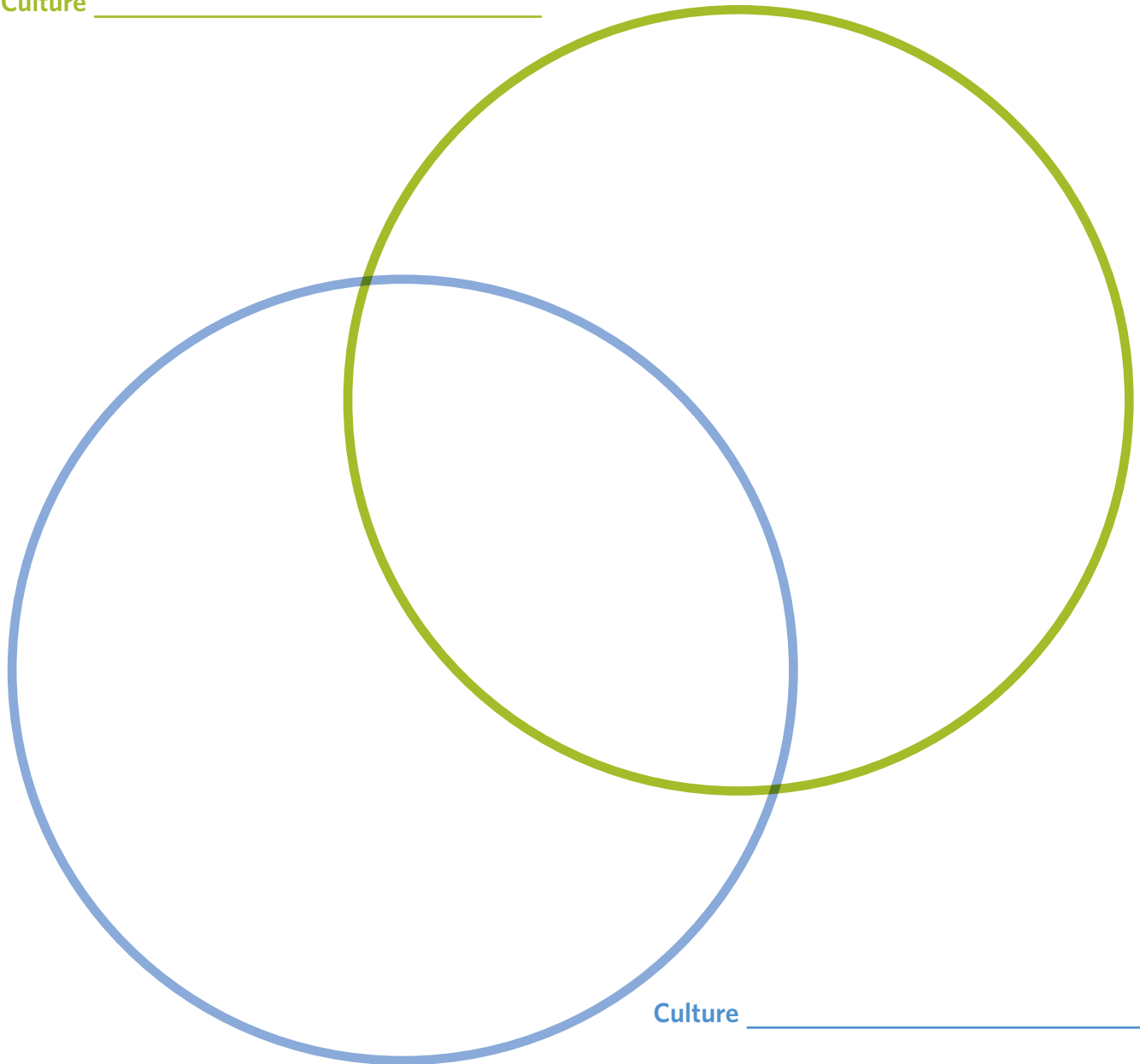


# Sergio • Handout 7

## Comparing Cultures

Use the Venn diagram below to compare and contrast two cultures. In the part of the circles that overlap, record the similarities between the cultures. In the parts of the circle that don't overlap, record the elements specific to each culture

Culture \_\_\_\_\_



Culture \_\_\_\_\_



# Sergio • Handout 9

## Chasing the Flame

The following is an excerpt from Samantha Powers' book *Sergio: One Man's Fight to Save the World*. Read actively by highlighting and taking notes as you go.



Having worked his entire adult life for the UN, Vieira de Mello, a fifty-five-year-old Brazilian, had plenty of experience with frustration. In his thirty-four years of service, he had moved with the headlines, working in Bangladesh, Sudan, Cyprus, Mozambique, Lebanon, Cambodia, Bosnia, Rwanda, Congo, Kosovo, and East Timor. He spoke Portuguese, English, French, Italian, and Spanish fluently and dabbled in several other languages. He had been rewarded for his talents with the toughest assignment of his career: UN envoy to Iraq.

He was suited for the job not because he knew Iraq—he didn't—but because he had amassed so much experience working in violent places. He could perhaps show the Americans what to do—and what not to do. He had long ago stopped believing that he brought the solutions to a place's woes, but he had grown masterful at asking the questions that helped reveal constructive ideas.





# Sergio • Handout 11 (page 1 of 2)

## A Life in Pictures

How does each photograph below show that Sergio Vieira de Mello worked to bridge cultural gaps? Record your thoughts below each picture.

PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED



Picture 1

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Picture 2

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# Sergio • Handout 11 (page 2 of 2)

PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED



Picture 3

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Picture 4

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# Sergio • Handout 12

## Quotes about Human Dignity

Read the following quotes about dignity. Then discuss each quote with a partner.



In the 21st century, I believe the mission of the United Nations will be defined by a new, more profound awareness of the sanctity and dignity of every human life, regardless of race or religion.

—KOFI ANNAN

Human rights rest on human dignity. The dignity of man is an ideal worth fighting for and worth dying for.

—ROBERT MAYNARD

Our dignity is not in what we do, but what we understand.

—GEORGE SANTAYANA

True dignity is never gained by place, and never lost when honors are withdrawn.

—PHILLIP MASSINGER



Now add your own quote about dignity:

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# Sergio • Handout 13 (page 1 of 2)

## Director's Statement

First read the director's statement. Then put the ideas into your own words

### SERGIO—Director's Statement

BY GREG BARKER

I've lived overseas for most of my adult life, and experienced the plunge in America's reputation around the world first hand. A few years ago, as the Iraq war dragged on, I was looking for a story that tapped into my belief that we needed a more nuanced, balanced approach to global problems beyond "you're with us or against us."

Then one evening I had drinks with my friend Samantha Power at Harvard, who was deep into writing *Chasing the Flame*, her new book about the UN's go-to guy, Sergio Vieira de Mello. Samantha's first book, on genocide, won the Pulitzer and I met her while making my film *Ghosts of Rwanda*. That film was the outgrowth of my seven-year quest to understand the world's inaction during the Rwandan genocide, and I came out of the experience convinced that the real heroes in this world are those who can navigate the shades of gray between good and evil. I knew Sergio was a master at dealing with the devil while keeping his own ideals intact (he joked his autobiography would be called *War Criminals, My Friend*).

But to be honest, I didn't think much of the United Nations. Most of its staff, including Kofi Annan, failed miserably during Rwanda, and I'd seen too many UN officials arrogantly career-ing through poverty-stricken countries in their gleaming-white SUVs, seemingly indifferent to the suffering right in front of their eyes. Yet the more I heard about Sergio, the more intrigued I became—he seemed different, a complicated hero for our complicated times.

In a world where most of us want to turn away from tough problems that defy easy answers, here was a guy who reveled in complexity, employing the full powers of his charm and intellect to seek practical solutions that never compromised his core values. For all his deal-making swagger, Sergio was at heart an

idealist who devoted his life to the simple belief that people the world over have a basic right to live their lives with dignity.

And then Samantha told me the extraordinary story of August 19, 2003—the day a massive truck bomb exploded directly beneath Sergio's third floor office at the UN headquarters in Baghdad, and the unforgettable bravery that unfolded deep over the next few hours deep inside the rubble, where Sergio lay trapped.

Immediately, I saw the film I had to make: a tight narrative focused on the incredible human drama of the search-and-rescue operation, intercut with Sergio's lifestory and the triumphs and intriguing contradictions that led him to that decisive moment.

This is one of those films that has changed me forever. I started off determined to expose the mistakes we've all lived through these past eight years. Then, in a surprising and wonderful way, my main character—a complicated, modern hero named Sergio—somehow infused the film with his infectious, almost boyish sense of optimism.

Sergio had probably seen more suffering and human misery than any man of his generation, yet it never seemed to dull his charisma, or his playful *joie de vivre*. He devoted his life to the dignity of the world's least fortunate, and then—in his final hours deep in the rubble—he conducted himself with a dignity that left me awe-struck and inspired.

And so for all its tragedy, I ended up making a film that I think is ultimately about hope and the abiding resilience of the human spirit—even in the face of impossible odds. That's what Sergio taught me, and maybe that's a quality we can all use a little of right now...

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Use the space below to paraphrase the director's ideas:

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