

A Common Word Among the Youth

August 2025

# G20 Youth Interfaith Forum Summary Report



Prepared by:

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**ACWAY**  
A Common Word Among the Youth



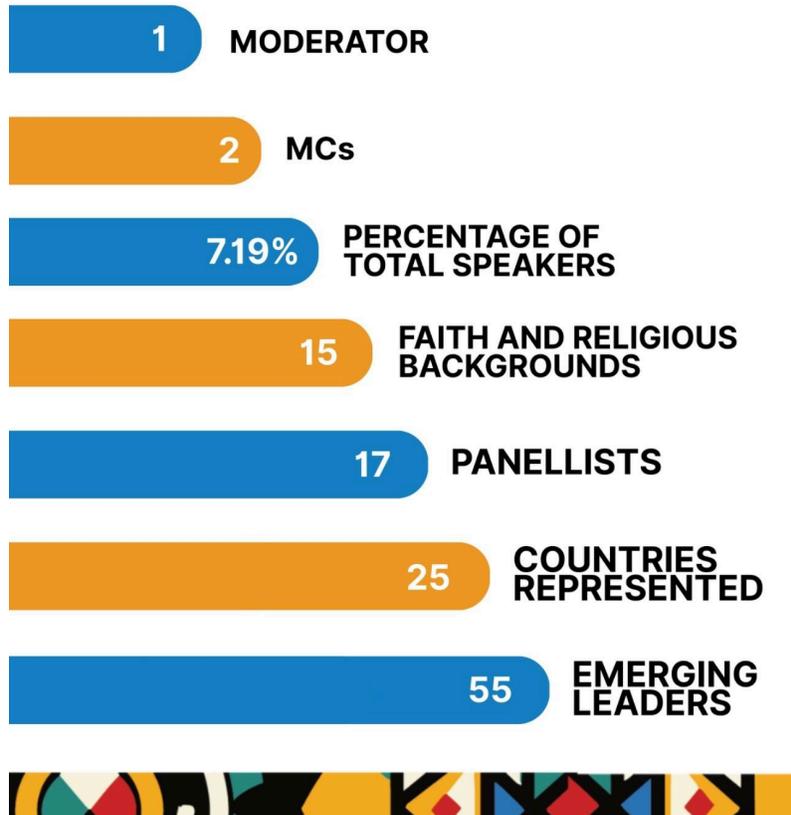
# 1. Executive summary

The ACWAY Youth Interfaith Forum 2025 (YIF20-2025) took place in Cape Town, South Africa, from 10 to 14 August 2025. The event was organized in partnership with the G20 Interfaith Forum and held in collaboration with the United Religions Initiative (URI), the Charter for Compassion, the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers, and the Dialogue Center Singapore, with support from the Stirling Foundation. The Forum brought together a diverse cohort of young emerging leaders, faith practitioners, educators, and civic actors from South Africa, Africa, and across the globe. It offered these Fellows, who are now ACWAY Fellows, a unique platform for interfaith dialogue, intercultural exchange, and youth leadership development at a time when polarisation, climate anxiety, and systemic exclusion of youth voices remain pressing issues on local and global stages.

The Forum successfully combined structured learning with experiential engagement, creating a sense of shared purpose and practical capacity-building among the Fellows.



## #YIF20SouthAfrica By the numbers



## Key achievements

- **Youth empowerment:** The Forum provided Fellows with a range of structured and experiential learning opportunities, curated by the ACWAY Programming Team, that would strengthen their leadership capacities. Through ACWAY's interactive workshops, peer-to-peer dialogue, and practical exercises, Fellows enhanced their skills in dialogue facilitation, advocacy, intercultural communication, and collaborative problem-solving. These skills were not only theoretical but applied in real-time during the Forum, as well as the main G20 Forum, enabling Fellows to practice and refine them. As a result, and in our debrief sessions, many Fellows reported a notable increase in confidence to engage in advocacy, represent youth voices in decision-making spaces, and potentially lead initiatives within their own communities and networks. This empowerment was recognised as one of the Forum's most transformative outcomes, equipping the Fellows to act as agents of change beyond the event itself.
- **Cross-cultural networks and partnerships:** The Forum also served as an amazing platform for fostering cross-cultural understanding and collaboration. Fellows were intentionally brought together from different faith traditions, regions, and sectors, encouraging them to share experiences, challenges, and solutions from their own contexts. The trust and empathy developed in dialogue circles and collaborative sessions, and in such a short period of time, translated into lasting relationships and new partnerships. These emerging connections have already begun to serve as the groundwork for collaborative projects, mentorship opportunities, and (cross-)regional initiatives. By bridging divides and creating spaces for meaningful exchange, the Forum laid a strong foundation for ongoing cooperation and joint action across borders.
- **Amplification of youth voices:** Recognising the need for greater visibility of youth contributions in global discourse, the Forum prioritised strategic communication and media engagement. Through targeted media partnerships, dynamic social media campaigns, and live coverage of sessions, youth perspectives were highlighted and disseminated widely. This made sure that the voices and insights of Fellows reached audiences well beyond the Forum venue, extending to local communities, international stakeholders, and global networks. And in doing so, the Forum not only amplified individual stories but also demonstrated the collective role of youth in shaping inclusive, peaceful societies. The visibility achieved reinforced the credibility of these young emerging leaders as key stakeholders in global dialogue, as was seen in the result of the Fellows' engagements in the G20 Forum.

- **Legacy planning:** Sustainability of outcomes was a central consideration throughout the Forum. To this end, several post-Forum engagement mechanisms are in the process of being established, including structured follow-up initiatives, dedicated participant networks, and digital platforms for resource-sharing and collaboration. These mechanisms are designed to ensure that the amazing momentum generated at the Forum is not lost, but instead harnessed for continued impact. The ACWAY Team made sure that Fellows left with clear opportunities to remain connected, collaborate on projects, and access shared knowledge bases. This intentional legacy planning strengthens the likelihood that the Forum’s influence will extend well beyond the event dates, fostering long-term impact and continuity in youth interfaith engagement.

## Recommendations for future editions

- **Continue youth co-creation in programme design:** Future editions of the Forum should build even more strongly on co-creation models that place young Fellows at the heart of programme development. This includes consulting Fellows during the design phase, incorporating youth-led sessions, and ensuring diverse representation in planning committees. If ACWAY actively involves young people in shaping agendas, themes, and activities, then the Forum will reflect their priorities and also build ownership, accountability, and long-term engagement.
- **Strengthen cross-border collaborations and follow-up initiatives:** The Forum successfully sparked dialogue and partnerships across geographies and faith traditions. To maximise impact, future editions should establish clearer mechanisms to support collaborative projects after the event. This may include dedicated seed funding, mentorship programmes, or digital platforms for Fellows to design and implement initiatives together. Such sustained collaboration ensures that connections made during the Forum evolve into tangible, long-lasting contributions to peacebuilding and social cohesion.
- **Expand media and communication strategies for greater visibility:** Visibility of youth voices is central to shifting narratives about young leaders’ roles in global dialogue. Future ACWAY Forums should invest in more comprehensive media strategies, including partnerships with local and international outlets, youth-focused platforms, and multimedia storytelling. Leveraging both traditional and digital channels will amplify outcomes and extend the Forum’s reach to a wider global audience. Added to this, strengthening training for Fellows on digital advocacy will empower them to share their stories and initiatives more effectively.
- **Consider adjustments to logistics and programme intensity to ensure accessibility and inclusivity:** While the 2025 Forum delivered a rich programme in a short period of time, feedback highlighted challenges around accessibility, scheduling intensity, and logistical complexity. Future editions should explore

multi-day formats with deeper engagements, as well as expanded accessibility measures for Fellows with different needs. Early and proactive visa support, flexible travel arrangements, and inclusive accommodation planning will be critical. These adjustments can therefore ensure that all Fellows, regardless of background or circumstance, can fully participate in and benefit from the Forum.

YIF20-2025 has established itself as a model for youth-led interfaith engagement, positioning young people as essential drivers of innovative solutions to global challenges.



# 2. Table of contents

- 1. Executive summary..... 2
- 2. Table of contents..... 6
- 3. Introduction..... 7
- 4. Planning & preparation..... 8
- 5. Programme, forum methodology, & format.....11
- 6. Participation & attendance.....17
- 7. Social media & online presence.....22
- 8. Highlights, key outcomes, & reflections.....26
- 9. Evaluation, challenges, & lessons learned..... 31
- 10. ACWAY Team & partners.....36
- 11. Conclusion.....39
- 12. Contact..... 41



### 3. Introduction

The Forum forms part of a wider global series dedicated to providing young emerging leaders with structured, meaningful spaces for dialogue, leadership development, and intercultural understanding. Each edition of the ACWAY Forum is designed to respond to emerging global and regional challenges while building on the insights and outcomes of previous gatherings, ensuring continuity, growth, and relevance.

#### Context

The 2025 edition marked a significant return to Africa, a continent with a rich history of interfaith collaboration, liberation struggles, and social justice movements. This return, marking ACWAY's 10th year in existence - with its first Forum hosted in the Kingdom of Morocco, acknowledged Africa's critical role in shaping global conversations on peace, resilience, and inclusion, while also honoring its traditions of community solidarity and cultural diversity.

Cape Town, as the host city, also has a profound symbolic importance. As a historic site of reconciliation, democratic transition, and diversity, Cape Town embodies the Forum's values of dialogue and coexistence. Its legacy of resistance against division and its ongoing journey toward social equity provided an inspiring backdrop for discussions on unity and shared futures.

The Forum was designed to address some of the most pressing global challenges of our time, including polarisation and fragmentation across societies, the escalating impacts of climate change, and the persistent underrepresentation of youth in decision-making structures. These carefully curated themes framed the conversations, workshops, and collaborative projects, and also ensured that the Forum remained both globally relevant and locally grounded.

#### Purpose, objectives, scope & audience

The central purpose of the Forum was to empower young Fellows not as leaders of tomorrow, but as current agents of change. Through carefully facilitated dialogue, collaborative exchange, and capacity-building workshops, the Forum enabled Fellows to develop practical skills, broaden perspectives, and strengthen their ability to take collective action.

The Forum brought together a diverse audience, including young emerging leaders, faith practitioners, educators, and civic actors from across multiple regions and traditions. This diversity ensured that conversations reflected a wide range of experiences and perspectives, and that the collaborative solutions emerging from the Forum had global applicability while remaining sensitive to local realities.



## 4. Planning & preparation

Planning for the Forum began five weeks before the event and required close coordination across several specialised teams. Despite the limited timeframe, this amazing team worked collaboratively and with a strong sense of purpose to deliver a meaningful and inclusive experience for all Fellows.

- **Programming & content development:** The Programming Team designed a balanced and dynamic agenda that combined keynotes, workshops, dialogue circles, cultural exchanges, and peer-to-peer learning opportunities. Importantly, much of the content was co-created with past Fellows to ensure relevance and ownership. This collaborative approach not only strengthened the quality of the sessions but also reinforced the Forum’s commitment to youth-led engagement.



*Vladislav Artiukhov,  
Programming Team.*

- **Engagement & communication:** Pre-event engagement was supported by a strong communication strategy, including social media campaigns across a number of ACWAY’s platforms, and the development of a comprehensive Participant Resource Hub. These tools created a sense of community even before Fellows arrived in Cape Town, offering a shared space for introductions, information exchange, and preparation. This early investment in engagement helped Fellows feel connected, informed, and ready to contribute.

Jyuri Michino, Engagement Team.



- **Finance & partnerships:** With limited resources available, the finance and partnerships team worked diligently to secure funding and manage the budget. Efforts focused on maximising inclusivity by prioritising travel support, and accessible participation. Strategic partnerships with supporting organisations played a crucial role in expanding the Forum’s reach and ensuring that diverse voices could be included, despite financial constraints.
- **Media & marketing:** The Media and Marketing Team elevated the visibility of the Forum through targeted pre-event campaigns, active live coverage, and compelling storytelling. These efforts amplified youth perspectives to a wider audience, both locally and internationally, while ensuring that the Forum’s key messages were communicated effectively across multiple platforms.
- **Logistics & administration:** The Logistics Team coordinated essential operational elements, including confirming travel arrangements, visa processes, accommodations, and venue management. Special attention was given to accessibility, ensuring that all Fellows could engage fully in the programme. Their ability to manage complex details under pressure contributed significantly to the smooth delivery of the event.

## Challenges and responses

The planning process was not without its challenges, including visa complications, limited resources, and the pressures of working within a tight five-week timeline. These hurdles required creativity, flexibility, and resilience from the entire team. Through their adaptive problem-solving and a strong commitment to inclusivity, the organising team ensured that the Forum was successfully delivered and that Fellows could fully participate in the experience.

Visa delays and accessibility concerns required close coordination with participants and highlighted the need for early action and proactive communication. The condensed one-day format, with sessions dispersed across the main forum programme, also required thoughtful design to balance depth of engagement with limited time. To support participants' readiness, the team worked quickly to provide orientation and preparatory resources, though the process revealed the value of distributing such materials earlier.

Despite these constraints, the team demonstrated remarkable adaptability and strong contingency planning. Their ability to respond quickly, remain solution-focused, and uphold inclusivity throughout the process was central to the successful delivery of the Forum. These strengths not only ensured a positive participant experience but also set a strong foundation for enhancing future planning cycles.



## 5. Programme, forum methodology, & format

The 2025 ACWAY Youth Interfaith Forum programme was designed to combine skills-based learning, experiential dialogue, and intercultural exchange, reflecting the Forum's values of Ubuntu, dialogue and empathy, intergenerational exchange, youth-led action, and inclusion and intersectionality.

Read the words of Katherine Marshall, Vice President of the G20 Interfaith Forum, delivered at the opening of the G20 Youth Interfaith Forum on the day before IF20 South Africa commenced.

In her [Introductory Comments at the YIF20 – Youth Interfaith Forum](#), she welcomed the youth and encouraged their active engagement.

### Objectives

The main objectives of the Forum were to:

1. Expand and strengthen a global network of young emerging leaders as interfaith practitioners equipped to deliver multicultural and interfaith activities in their communities.
2. Share practical tools, skills, and experiences that advance interfaith dialogue and peacebuilding across diverse contexts.
3. Deliver a skill-based, outcomes-driven programme that allows Fellows to contextualise their work and collaborate across regions.
4. Facilitate collaborative processes between grassroots and international interfaith youth organisations.
5. Prepare Fellows to engage strategically within the G20 Interfaith Forum framework and broader interfaith initiatives.

In line with these objectives, the ACWAY Programming Team sought to create an interactive and inclusive environment where Fellows could learn, share, and apply skills and experiences.

Watch the following recaps: [Day 1 recap](#), [Day 2 recap](#), [Day 3 recap](#), of the ACWAY Youth Interfaith Forum. Thereafter, read about methodology, programme structure, and key sessions.

### Methodology

The Forum adopted a dialogue-based methodology grounded in the principles of listening to understand, sharing from personal experience, respecting differences, and upholding

confidentiality and consent. This approach fostered a safe and brave space where Fellows could express themselves openly, while also being encouraged to engage meaningfully across lines of difference.



*Round table discussion with Fellows and Rawaad Mahyub, ACWAY Advisor.*

## Programme structure

The Forum balanced structured learning with interactive and cultural engagement, providing Fellows with multiple avenues to connect, exchange, and collaborate. The programme included:

- Plenary sessions with diverse speakers addressing core themes.
- Interactive workshops on dialogue facilitation, advocacy, and project design.
- Dialogue circles and peer exchanges for small-group discussions.
- Cultural activities to deepen intercultural understanding.

The following link leads to the Resource Hub, [ACWAY x YIF20 | Resource Hub](#), a living document used to share all key details with Fellows before and during the Forum.

## Key sessions

- **Ubuntu in action: Wisdom, tools, and practices:** Fellows engaged in a vibrant exchange of grounded practices from diverse faiths and cultures. Through short, interactive presentations, they explored how values such as compassion, dignity, and solidarity are applied in community work, advocacy, and interfaith action.
- **Advocacy through action: Reflecting back, moving forward:** This panel highlighted a decade of interfaith youth action, showcasing projects that have shaped communities worldwide. Fellows explored lessons learned, best practices, and the *Interfaith Development Goals (IDGs)*—a values-based framework guiding sustainable and inclusive impact.



*Fellows project planning.*

- **Innovation studio: Design your blueprint for change:** A hands-on session where Fellows began planning their own interfaith initiatives to be implemented within the first six months post-Forum. Fellows collaborated to design project blueprints, fostering innovation and building capacity for real-world impact.



*Fellow presenting her interfaith and intercultural activity.*

- **Preparing with purpose: Your role at the G20 Interfaith Forum:** This session prepared Fellows to engage strategically with the G20 Interfaith Forum. It highlighted the week's key sessions, partner-led excursions, and offered guidance on how to apply the IDGs when pitching ideas and networking.
- **Main forum cultural dinner and independent time:** Beyond structured sessions, cultural experiences and reflective spaces allowed Fellows to rest, recharge, explore the local area, or connect informally with peers.
- **ACWAY post-Forum follow-up session:** A practical closing space for Fellows to refine their project ideas, explore collaborations, and pitch initiatives to peers. This session provided a foundation for continued engagement and accountability beyond the Forum.

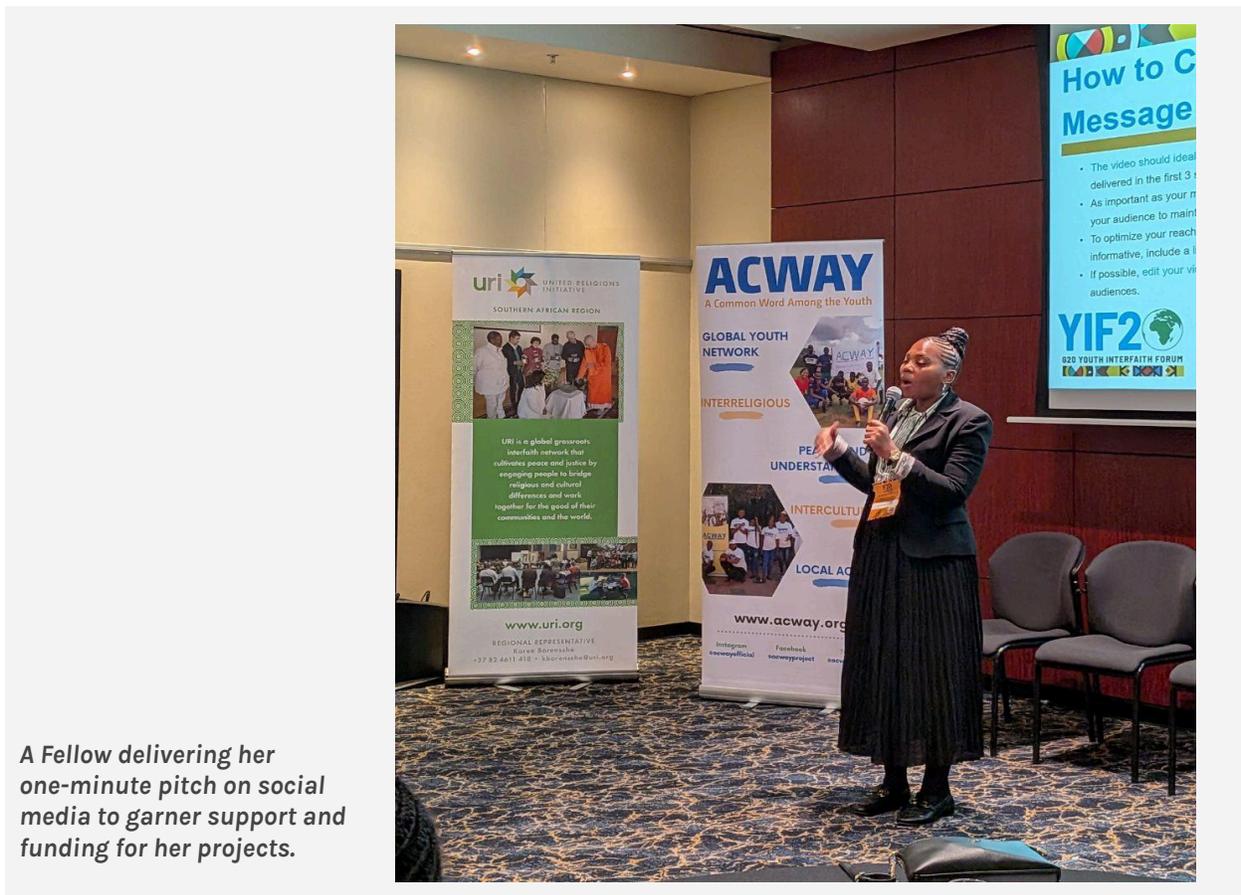
## Partner-led sessions

Beyond ACWAY-led sessions, Fellows actively engaged with partner-led sessions during the G20 Interfaith Forum, including:

- **Charter for Compassion:** This session introduced participants to foundational tools and frameworks for interfaith understanding and collaboration, emphasising shared values such as empathy, dignity, and respect. Participants engaged in interactive

exercises to practice active listening and compassionate communication, helping them build skills to facilitate meaningful dialogue in diverse community contexts.

- **United Religions Initiative:** Through hands-on, values-based activities, participants explored the intersection of interfaith collaboration and ecological restoration, learning how spiritual principles can guide environmental action. The session also highlighted Indigenous knowledge and community-based practices, showing participants practical ways to integrate faith-inspired sustainability initiatives into their local and global projects.
- **Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers:** This session equipped participants with strategies for both in-person dialogue and digital advocacy, demonstrating how to influence change across multiple platforms. Attendees also examined real-world case studies of successful interfaith initiatives, gaining actionable insights that could be applied during the G20 Interfaith Forum and in ongoing youth-led peacebuilding efforts.



*A Fellow delivering her one-minute pitch on social media to garner support and funding for her projects.*

- **Dialogue Centre Singapore:** Participants received practical tools for building trust, navigating difficult conversations, and managing sensitive interfaith interactions in diverse communities. The session combined role-playing exercises, simulations, and

reflective discussions, enabling participants to practice and internalise these skills for application in their own contexts, projects, and peer networks.



*Fellows participated in an interfaith dialogue 101 workshop hosted by the Dialogue Centre Singapore.*

Read a reflection on one of the panels, where ACWAY team member Rodge Jr. Lelis spoke about youth and mental health, in the article [Youth and mental health under the spotlight at G20 Interfaith Forum in Cape Town](#).



## 6. Participation & attendance

### Participant engagement

ACWAY's selection process ensured diverse representation across regions, faith and secular traditions, and professional sectors. Importantly, Fellows were not only attendees but also active contributors as they played roles in session design, facilitation, and collaborative project development.

This participatory approach reflected the Forum's commitment to youth-led action, ensuring that outcomes were not only relevant but also genuinely owned by the Fellows themselves.

The cohort brought together young leaders, educators, faith practitioners, and civic actors, representing a broad range of cultural, spiritual, and professional backgrounds. Efforts were made to achieve a balanced representation in terms of gender, geography, and age, with the majority of Fellows being under 35 years old.



*Fellow round-table engagements.*

Beyond the Forum itself, engagement extended to wider audiences through media partnerships, livestreams, and digital platforms—amplifying youth voices and ensuring the reach of discussions and outcomes to communities beyond those present in Cape Town.

Listen to reflections on youth involvement in the G20 Interfaith Forum through [Youth voices in the G20IF](#) and [International youth day reflections on youth voices](#).

## Engagement with the G20 Interfaith Forum

ACWAY Fellows also took part in the G20 Interfaith Forum, bringing youth perspectives to the forefront of global discussions. They engaged in theme-specific dialogues, sharing their expertise in particular sectors while ensuring that the voices and priorities of young people were represented throughout the conversations. Their contributions fostered meaningful intergenerational dialogue and highlighted the importance of including youth in decision-making processes. By actively participating, Fellows not only influenced discussions but also strengthened networks for ongoing collaboration and impact beyond the Forum.



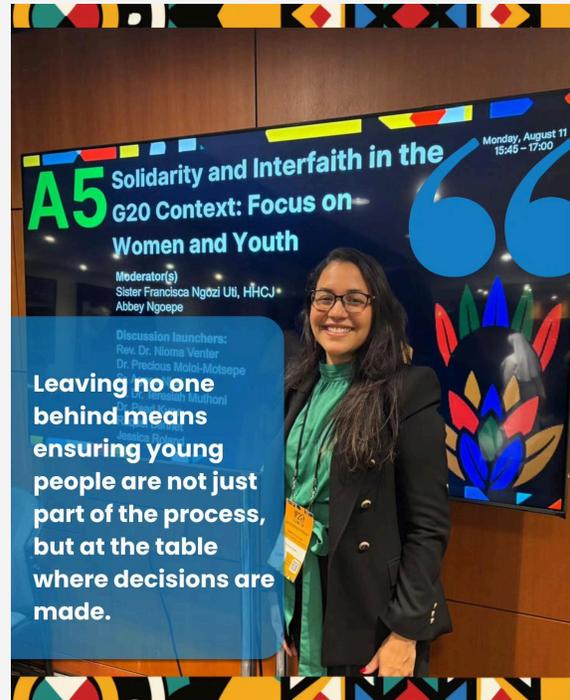
*Liliya Khasanova, ACWAY Director.*



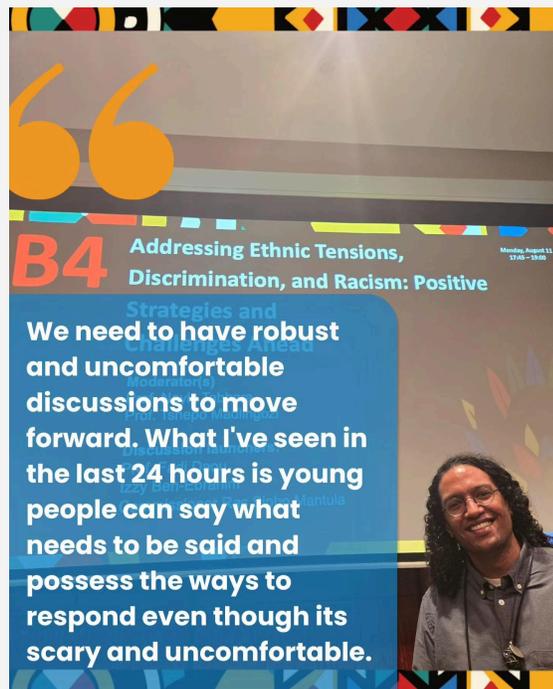
*Rodge Lelis Jr., Programming and Content Development Team.*



Sibu Szymanowska, Media and Marketing Team.

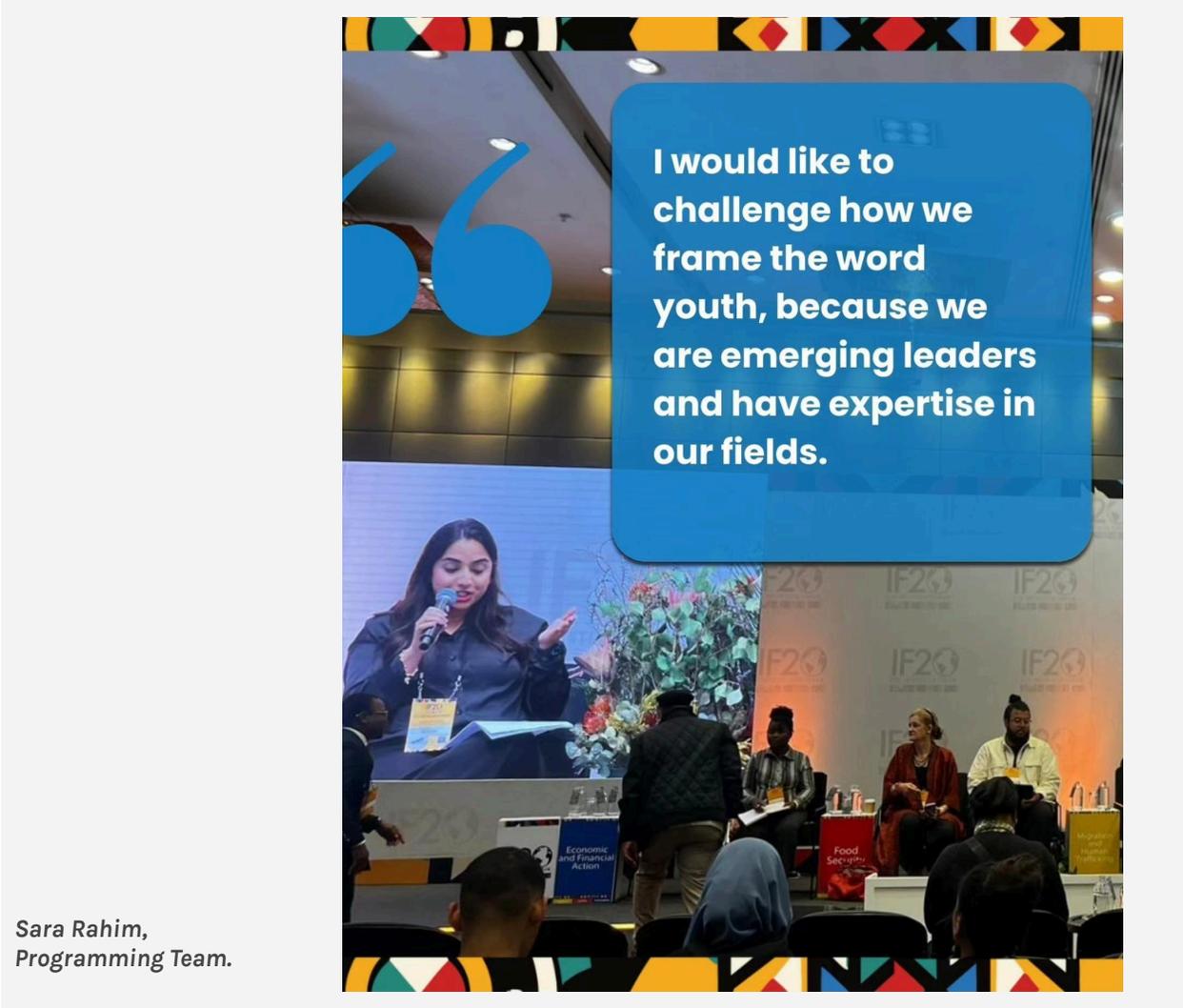


Raquel Bennet, Media and Marketing Team.



Izzy Ben-Ebrahim, Project Manager.

Fellows also actively participated in intergenerational dialogue sessions on the main stage, representing the youth voice and, in many ways, speaking truth to power. Their contributions highlighted the unique perspectives and priorities of younger generations, emphasising the importance of inclusion in decision-making processes. Through these exchanges, Fellows challenged assumptions, offered innovative solutions, and fostered mutual understanding across age groups. This engagement not only amplified youth perspectives but also strengthened intergenerational collaboration, ensuring that diverse voices informed the Forum’s discussions and outcomes.



55

The ACWAY Youth Interfaith Forum 2025 brought together **55 youth leaders**, highlighting the growing role of younger generations in community and global leadership.

The ACWAY Youth Interfaith Forum 2025 brought together youth leaders from **25 countries**, reflecting the Forum's global reach and commitment to diverse, cross-cultural engagement.

25

### Speakers and panelists

20

Out of the total fellows, **20** were engaged as speakers and panelists at the G20IF, sharing their insights and perspectives as emerging leaders.

### Gender balance

26-29

Among participants, **29** were female and **26** male, demonstrating the Forum's commitment to gender inclusivity in leadership.

### Existing Fellow participation

11

Of the Fellows, **11** were existing ACWAY members, including planning team members, bringing continuity and experience to youth leadership.

### Faith and tradition representation

15

The representation spans **15** faith and secular traditions, enriching discussions and broadening perspectives within the group.



## 7. Social media & online presence

A strong digital presence was central to amplifying the Forum’s impact and ensuring that youth voices reached audiences beyond those present in Cape Town. Social media channels and online platforms were used strategically before, during, and after the Forum to raise awareness, engage Fellows, and share outcomes.

- **Pre-Forum** campaigns introduced the event, highlighted selected Fellows and speakers, and created momentum around the Forum’s themes. These efforts helped build anticipation and a sense of community even before Fellows gathered.
- **During the Forum**, live coverage through posts, stories, and livestreams showcased key sessions, quotes, and behind-the-scenes moments. This allowed a wider audience, both locally and internationally, to follow the discussions in real time and engage with the values of Ubuntu, dialogue, and youth-led action.
- **Post-Forum** content focused on capturing highlights, celebrating participant contributions, and providing updates on follow-up initiatives. This ensured continuity of engagement and maintained visibility for youth-led projects that emerged from the Forum.

The Forum’s online presence also relied on media partnerships and participant-driven advocacy. Many Fellows acted as digital ambassadors, using their own platforms to share reflections and amplify the reach of the Forum’s messages.

### ACWAY Forum hashtags

During the Forum, the following hashtags were actively used:

#YIF20Interfaith #ACWAY10 #10YearsofACWAY #YIF2025 #CapeTownYIF20  
#InterfaithDialogue #UbuntuInAction #YIF20Ubuntu2025 #ACWAYYouth

### Social media platforms & engagement metrics

Between 21st July and 30th August, the Forum’s social media presence experienced a remarkable surge across Instagram, LinkedIn, and Facebook, expanding both reach and engagement significantly.

On Instagram, followers grew to 1,062, with 116 new followers gained during the period. A total of 59 posts were published, resulting in 1,286 profile views—a 482.4% increase—and an impressive 77,442 views overall, marking a 27,186% rise since June. This sharp growth indicates not only improved visibility but also a stronger connection with younger audiences, with engagement driven by committee introductions and youth/emerging leader quotes.



Fellow's (2025) Instagram post. ([Link](#))



URI Instagram post. ([Link](#))

LinkedIn also demonstrated notable growth, rising to 617 followers with 111 new additions. With 24 posts, the platform generated 9,414 impressions, representing a 2761.4% increase, and saw 23 comments, a 2200% increase. This illustrates LinkedIn's role in engaging professional networks and highlighting the Forum's global relevance.

**Samukelisiwe Mkhize** • 2nd  
 Digital Specialist | Absa Junior UX/UI Copywriter & Designe...  
 1mo • 🌐

✓ Following ...

Day 1 at the G20 Interfaith Forum's Youth Interfaith Forum in Cape Town ZA ✨  
 Proud to represent ACWAY and Rising Generation initiative with BYU connect with  
 inspiring young changemakers from around the world! #G20 #ACWAY  
 #ChangeMakers

🌐 🌐 Yassin Medhouny Laouina and 22 others      1 comment · 1 repost

👍 Like      💬 Comment      🔄 Repost      ➦ Send

Fellow's (2025) LinkedIn post. ([Link](#))

**Judith Mahlangu** • 2nd  
 Intern Educational Psychologist | MEd (Educational Psychol...  
 1mo • Edited • 🌐

✓ Following ...

Day 2 of the **G20 Interfaith Forum- IF20** - I had the privilege of being an MC for the event alongside my co-MC **Sandile Hlayisi** who was a fantastic teammate. One of my favourite moments included a moment of prayer at the beginning of the forum from different religious/spiritual sects that highlighted the beauty of interfaith collaboration.

There were two main plenaries and two concurrent sessions that provided a wide range of discussions around debt, hunger and poverty, women and youth in the G20 context, health, and ethnic tensions among many others. The sessions were long and the topics hit close to home but **A Common Word Among the Youth (ACWAY)** created a wonderful community of supportive and insightful Fellows to debrief with.

#G20SouthAfrica #InterfaithForum #RisingGeneration #ACWAY

+5

Fellow's (2025) LinkedIn post. ([Link](#))

Meanwhile, Facebook maintained its position as the largest platform, reaching 9,074 followers. Despite only 5 posts, the platform achieved 8,307 views—a 1252.9% increase—and 369 interactions, reflecting a 1053% growth. This demonstrates Facebook’s continued importance for reaching wide and diverse demographics, especially across regions such as India, Pakistan, Egypt, Indonesia, and the UK.



Fellow’s (2025) Facebook post. [\(Link\)](#)

Overall, these significant increases in followers, impressions, and engagement underscore the Forum’s expanding global coverage. The momentum on Instagram reflects its appeal to younger demographics, LinkedIn’s growth points to strengthening professional credibility, and Facebook remains a critical tool for broad community outreach. Together, the platforms have created a more visible, engaged, and diverse audience base, amplifying the Forum’s voice and ensuring its activities resonate globally.

Read the press article [Global Youth Leaders Unite in Cape Town to Champion Compassion, Ubuntu, and Interfaith Action at Youth IF20](#), which highlights the gathering of youth leaders at the Forum.



## 8. Highlights, key outcomes, & reflections

The success of the Forum was a culmination of the teams' efforts and their drive to recreate an authentic ACWAY experience for new Fellows. Every element of the programme, from plenary sessions and interactive workshops to dialogue circles and cultural activities, was carefully designed to foster learning, collaboration, and meaningful engagement. Participants were not only recipients of knowledge but active contributors, shaping discussions, co-creating projects, and applying their skills in real time.

### Programme highlights

- **Opening ceremony:** The Forum began with a thoughtfully curated opening ceremony that contextualised Cape Town's unique history of dialogue, reconciliation, and social activism. Keynote addresses highlighted the importance of youth-led action and interfaith collaboration, setting the tone for reflective and constructive engagement. Cultural performances, including music, storytelling, and dance, celebrated local and global traditions, emphasising the Forum's commitment to intercultural understanding.



*Liliya Khasanova, ACWAY Director, at the opening ceremony address.*

- **Plenary sessions:** Plenary sessions provided a platform for thought leaders, practitioners, and youth Fellows to discuss pressing global and local challenges. Themes included climate justice, peacebuilding, and youth participation. Through panels, presentations, and interactive discussions, Fellows explored how these issues intersect with faith, leadership, and community engagement. The sessions encouraged critical thinking, reflection, and collaborative problem-solving.



*ACWAY Fellow contributing in one of the plenary sessions.*

- **Workshops:** Hands-on workshops focused on dialogue facilitation, storytelling for change, advocacy, and project management. These sessions were designed to equip Fellows with practical skills that could be applied in their communities and ongoing initiatives. Workshops emphasised peer-to-peer learning, co-creation, and skill-building, enabling Fellows to leave with actionable strategies and new approaches for interfaith engagement.
- **Dialogue circles:** Small-group dialogue circles provided **safe and supportive spaces** for Fellows to share personal narratives, experiences, and cultural perspectives. These sessions fostered empathy, trust, and mutual understanding, encouraging Fellows to explore sensitive topics and reflect on their own approaches to leadership and advocacy. Dialogue circles were a cornerstone of the Forum’s methodology, promoting meaningful engagement across differences.
- **Cultural Night:** The Cultural Night celebrated diversity and creativity, offering Fellows an opportunity to showcase music, storytelling, and performance from their own backgrounds. This immersive experience reinforced the Forum’s values of intercultural understanding, inclusivity, and shared humanity. Fellows expressed that these informal cultural exchanges were among the most memorable and impactful aspects of the Forum.



*ACWAY's Cultural Night celebration.*

## Key outcomes

- **Enhanced skills and confidence:** Fellows reported measurable increases in their dialogue facilitation, advocacy, intercultural communication, and project management skills. Many expressed greater confidence in leading initiatives in their communities and advocating for youth voices in decision-making spaces.
- **Strengthened cross-cultural networks:** The Forum fostered lasting relationships across countries, faith traditions, and professional sectors. These networks laid the groundwork for collaborative projects, joint advocacy, and ongoing knowledge-sharing, extending the Forum's impact beyond the event itself.
- **Amplified youth visibility:** Through engagement at the G20 Interfaith Forum, social media campaigns, and live coverage, the Forum significantly enhanced the visibility of youth perspectives. Fellows were recognised as credible contributors and thought leaders, demonstrating the critical role of young people in shaping inclusive and peaceful societies.
- **Commitments to collaborative projects and legacy initiatives:** Fellows committed to concrete follow-up actions, including post-Forum projects, peer-to-peer mentorship, and resource-sharing initiatives. These commitments reflect a sustained focus on long-term impact, ensuring that the Forum's lessons, networks, and

collaborative spirit continue to drive meaningful change in communities around the world.

- **Strengthening existing partnerships and establishing new ones:** Fellows actively worked on developing their own partnerships, while ACWAY simultaneously strengthened its organisational-level collaborations. This dual approach ensured that both individual initiatives and broader institutional networks were nurtured, supporting ongoing dialogue, shared learning, and cooperative initiatives that extend the Forum’s impact across countries, faiths, and sectors.

Watch these testimonials from the ACWAY Forum to hear participants’ personal experiences and insights: [My Experience at the IF20 Interfaith Forum in Cape Town, South Africa](#) – Fellows share their highlights and key moments from the Forum, [What’s it like being part of ACWAY?](#) – Participants reflect on the value of being part of the ACWAY community, and [What is your biggest take away?](#) – Fellows discuss the lessons, skills, and inspiration they gained from the Forum.

## Testimonials (from the evaluation form)

*“I have made amazing connections. Especially when it comes to my personal projects - connecting with people who are interested in the African Jewish story. Projects and collaborations are beginning”*

Jessica Jantjies, South Africa

*“I loved every minute of it! It was such a safe and accepting space. There was so much love, joy and unity! It was one of my best highlights of 2025!”*

Anonymous, South Africa

*“This forum helped me to reflect and increase my ability in interfaith and peacebuilding. Also, networking with other people including young generation who are working on interfaith made me feel empowered and fulfilling and the feeling that I am not alone was the most important to me. I carry these feelings dearly in my heart and I will continue to engage with everyone in my works and friendship that we build in this forum. Thank you.”*

Hidaya Dude, Tanzania

*“What stays with me most is the trust and openness that grew within the group. Each session felt like an opportunity not just to learn, but to connect and share a part of ourselves. Thank you for making this possible!”*

Yassin Medhouni-Laouina, Morocco.

*“Truly, this was an opportunity to uplift my ideas and action plan for community work, it was well informative forum and really have awakened the need to call on our faiths as we believe in humanity to bring forth global peace.”*

Petersen Nghiyoonanye, Namibia.

*“YIF20 was more than a forum. It was a living example of unity across faiths, cultures, and traditions. The values that bind us, compassion, justice, and stewardship, echoed throughout the conversations, reminding us that our differences need not divide us. I was especially moved by how diverse perspectives and interfaith principles came together to offer holistic responses to today’s challenges. This experience deepened my conviction that youth are not only beneficiaries of dialogue but also powerful drivers of it. I leave inspired to apply these lessons in my community and to carry forward the networks and friendships built here.”*

Anonymous, Kenya.

## Partner testimonials

Read the reflection from the United Religions Initiative on youth participation at the G20 Interfaith Forum: [United Religions Initiative: Youth at the G20 Interfaith Forum](#).



## 9. Evaluation, challenges, & lessons learned

The Forum created a deeply impactful space for young leaders to connect, share, and grow in their interfaith journeys. Feedback from participants highlights a transformative experience filled with inspiration, connection, and action. While participants expressed strong appreciation for the forum's safe spaces, workshops, and opportunities for dialogue, they also offered constructive feedback on representation, programme design, and logistics. The following summary outlines participant reflections across key themes.

### Participant evaluations

Out of all respondents who filled out the evaluation form:

- **100%** mentioned that the forum inspired them to take future action in their community or network;
- **92%** mentioned that the forum exceeded their expectations;
- **52%** mentioned that they are confident in facilitating or leading interfaith initiatives.



*Fellows at the closing of the Youth Forum.*

## Overall experience

Participants overwhelmingly described the forum as transformative, inspiring, and revolutionary, with most rating it 4–5 out of 5. They expressed feeling welcomed, safe, and included, appreciating ACWAY’s facilitation, reflective sessions, and creation of safe spaces.

- Common words used: *Transformative, Inspiring, Revolutionary, Hopeful, Expansive, Powerful, Amazing, Ubuntu, Grounding, Illuminating.*
- Many highlighted that the atmosphere enabled honesty, openness, and meaningful connection.

## Favorite aspects of the forum

The most memorable parts of the Forum centered on youth engagement, intergenerational dialogue, and hands-on experiences.

- **Youth engagement & breakout sessions:** ACWAY check-ins, social bingo, dialogue spaces.
- **Panels with youth and elders:** especially valued intergenerational dialogue moments.
- **Workshops:** Charter for Compassion, Ubuntu in Action, Advocacy Through Action, Innovation Studio.
- **Service project:** packing 33,000 meals was a powerful collective action moment.
- **Networking & group connections:** many participants spoke about building lifelong friendships and collaborations.



*Fellows engaged in service.*

Watch as our Fellows join Rise Against Hunger to [pack 33,000 meals for children](#) in the Cape Town community.

## Areas for improvement

While participants valued the experience, they identified key areas to strengthen:

- **Representation:**
  - Greater presence of youth and women on plenary panels in the main G20 forum.
  - Frustration with overrepresentation of older/political voices.
- **Programme design:**
  - More time for networking and reflection.
  - Some sessions felt rushed or overly packed.
  - Interest in giving youth opportunities to present their projects.
  - Desire for a joint youth statement or communiqué for the main forum.
- **Accessibility & logistics:**
  - Some dietary issues (vegetarian/vegan meals mislabeled or mixed).
  - High school participants' attendance is limited by schedules.
  - Requests for lighter pacing, more rest breaks, and cultural exploration of the host city.

## Expectations

Most participants said their expectations were met or exceeded. A smaller group responded “Somewhat” or “No,” citing concerns with representation and programme intensity.

- **Met or exceeded:** Many said the forum surpassed expectations, especially in fostering connection and dialogue.
- **Partially met:** Concerns included lack of women/youth representation in early sessions, an overpacked schedule, and insufficient pre-arrival communication.

## Engagement & learning

Participants rated sessions highly, with particular praise for practical and reflective elements.

- **Opening Ceremony & Community Agreements:** seen as grounding and valuable.
- **Advocacy Through Action & Charter for Compassion:** praised for practical advocacy and compassion-based leadership.
- **Ubuntu in Action & Network for Religious Peacemakers:** valued for showing interfaith in practice, not just discussion.
- **Innovation Studio (Blueprint for Change):** inspired participants to start projects and turn ideas into action.
- **Preparing with Purpose & Wrap-Up Circle:** offered reflection, closure, and high energy to end the forum.

## Personal connections & impact

The Forum strengthened confidence, skills, and a sense of purpose. Participants highlighted specific sessions that resonated deeply.

- **Most impactful sessions:** Charter for Compassion, Safe Spaces workshop, Human Trafficking session, Ubuntu in Action, Intergenerational Dialogue.
- **Skills gained:** dialogue facilitation, public speaking, collaborative design, compassion-based leadership, cross-cultural communication, strategic planning, understanding of IDGs.
- Many left feeling empowered to lead interfaith initiatives in their communities.

## Future action

Nearly all participants expressed motivation to act following the forum. Planned actions include:

- **Community and youth projects:** employment, education, support for vulnerable communities.
- **Interfaith dialogues and workshops:** in schools, informal settlements, climate action, peacebuilding.
- **Blueprint for Change projects:** commitments to continue ideas developed in the Innovation Studio.

- **Personal initiatives:** blogs, toolkits, safe spaces, advocacy campaigns, cultural awareness projects.

## Logistics & atmosphere

The logistics and atmosphere received mixed but mostly positive feedback.

- **Schedule:** clear, though some found it tight and tiring.
- **Accessibility & dietary needs:** supported in most cases, but not always consistent.
- **Atmosphere:** universally described as welcoming, safe, and empowering.

## Final Reflections

Participants left YIF20 with renewed conviction, describing the forum as:

- *Transformative, Revolutionary, Inspiring, Ubuntu, Illuminating, Strategic, Fulfilling, Amazing.*
- Many praised ACWAY for creating a safe, empowering, and love-filled space.
- Several emphasised the significance of Ubuntu and African leadership in shaping global interfaith dialogue.
- Requests included: extending the forum length, stronger youth/women representation, and a formal youth communiqué to link with the main forum outcomes.



## 10. ACWAY Team & partners

The team was composed of 10 dedicated past Fellows who returned to volunteer, representing 10 different countries. Over the course of five months, they worked collaboratively across time zones and areas of expertise to bring the Forum to life. Each member contributed their unique skills, from project management and programming to communications, logistics, and media, ensuring that every aspect of the Forum was thoughtfully planned and executed. Their diverse backgrounds and shared commitment created a dynamic team that successfully delivered a truly global and impactful event.

Name	Country	Fellow Year	Role(s)
Azizah Mutik-Lefebvre	Indonesia	2015	Admin, Engagement and Communication, Logistics
Hira Aftab	UK	2015	Media and Marketing
Izzy Ben-Ebrahim	South Africa	2015	Project Manager
Jabari Smith	USA	2015	Master of Ceremonies
Jyuri Michino	Japan	2015	Admin, Engagement and Communication, Programming and Content Development, Logistics
Liliya Khasanova	Russia	2015	Admin, Engagement and Communication, Logistics
Raquel Bennet	Brazil	2016	Media and Marketing
Rawaad Mahyub	UK	2015	Advisor and Volunteer
Rodge Lelis Jr.	Philippines	2017	Programming and Content Development
Sara Rahim	USA	2017	Programming and Content Development
Sibu Szymanowska	Costa Rica	2021	Media and Marketing
Vladislav Artiukhov	Russia	2023	Programming and Content Development, Logistics



**ACWAY Forum Team, 2025.**

*From left to right: Jabbari Smith, Siby Szymanowska, Izzy Ben-Ebrahim, Liliya Khasanova, Rodge Lelis, Azizah Mutik-Lefebvre, Hira Aftab, Raquel Bennet, Jyuri Michino, Sara Rahim, and Vladislav Artiukhov.*

Watch the team's final bow – a heartfelt thank you from all of us: [Thank you, ACWAY Family.](#)

## Partners

We would like to extend our deepest appreciation and heartfelt gratitude to the following organisations. Their unwavering partnership and collaboration with ACWAY played a vital role in bringing this Forum to life. Through their support, commitment, and shared vision, we were able to create a truly engaging and impactful experience that fostered dialogue, connection, and meaningful exchange among Fellows and participants.



[The G20 Interfaith Forum](#) | The G20 Interfaith Forum seeks global solutions by collaborating with religious thought leaders and political representatives. It builds on vital roles that religious institutions and beliefs play in world affairs, reflecting a rich diversity of institutions, ideas, and values. The membership includes interfaith and intercultural organisations, religious leaders, scholars, development and humanitarian entities, and business and civil society actors.



[Stirling Foundation](#) | The Stirling Foundation works with trusted partners in several countries and regions to overcome challenges facing families, communities, and nations by providing partners with what they need to do more good, for more people.



[Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers](#) | The Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers builds bridges between grassroots peacemakers and global players to strengthen the work done for sustainable peace. The Peacemakers Network strengthens peacemaking by collaboratively supporting the positive role of religious and traditional actors in peace and peacebuilding processes.



[United Religions Initiative](#) | The United Religions Initiative (URI) is a global grassroots interfaith network that cultivates peace and justice by engaging people to bridge religious and cultural differences and work together for the good of their communities and the world.



[Charter for Compassion](#) | The Charter for Compassion is a global movement that connects individuals, communities, institutions, and cities to embed compassion as a core principle in civic life, education, business, and religious practice. It supports local and international networks in fostering justice, dignity, and care for all—working toward a transformed world where compassion informs public policy, community action, and daily human interactions.



[Dialogue Centre, Singapore](#) | The Dialogue Centre, Singapore, is an organisation dedicated to fostering understanding, cooperation, and harmony in a diverse society through three core areas of focus: Freedom of Religion and/or Belief (FoRB), Diversity and Inclusion (D&I), and Young and Emerging Leadership. Grounded in Singapore's constitutional and social frameworks, the Centre engages in public education, dialogue, and community initiatives that strengthen religious harmony and promote mutual respect. By taking an intersectional approach to diversity and inclusion, it creates safe and brave spaces for meaningful conversations that go beyond labels and emphasise lived experiences. At the same time, the Centre invests in cultivating young leaders equipped to navigate complex, pluralistic environments with sensitivity, empathy, and civic commitment.



## 11. Conclusion

The ACWAY Youth Interfaith Forum 2025 successfully achieved its stated objectives, providing a transformative platform for young leaders from diverse cultural, religious, and geographic backgrounds. Fellows were empowered with practical skills in dialogue facilitation, advocacy, storytelling, and collaborative project design, leaving the Forum with increased confidence to take action in their communities and beyond.

The Forum also amplified youth voices at an international level, particularly within the G20 Interfaith Forum framework, demonstrating the vital role that young people play in shaping inclusive policies, fostering intercultural understanding, and advancing social cohesion. By bringing together a diverse cohort of youth, faith practitioners, educators, and civic actors, the Forum fostered lasting global networks, creating opportunities for cross-border collaboration and collective action.

The ACWAY Youth Interfaith Forum 2025 exemplified the power of youth-led initiatives, showing that young people are not only future leaders but current drivers of innovative solutions to pressing global challenges such as polarisation, climate change, and social exclusion. The ACWAY organisation is also excited to see the projects and activities that will stem from this Forum. The Forum's emphasis on co-creation, experiential learning, and cultural exchange reinforced its impact, ensuring that Fellows were both inspired and equipped to implement tangible projects in their own contexts.

### Next steps

To build on the momentum generated during the Forum, several strategic steps have been identified:

- **Sustain networks and peer initiatives:** Fellows will remain actively engaged through online platforms, peer mentoring, and collaborative projects. These networks will facilitate continued knowledge-sharing, support, and joint advocacy across countries and faith traditions.
- **Resource sharing via the participant resource hub:** All learning materials, session recordings, toolkits, and guidelines will be maintained in the Resource Hub to ensure ongoing access. This platform will serve as a repository for best practices and a foundation for new initiatives inspired by the Forum.
- **Planning for The ACWAY Youth Interfaith Forum 2026:** Lessons learned from the 2025 edition, particularly around programme intensity, logistical planning, participant engagement, and inclusivity, will inform the design and execution of the next Forum. This ensures that future editions continue to enhance learning outcomes and expand global reach.

- **Strengthen partner collaboration for long-term sustainability:** Continued engagement with partner organisations, funders, and institutional allies will support the growth of youth-led interfaith initiatives. Strategic partnerships will enable more inclusive participation, enhance programme delivery, and amplify the Forum’s long-term impact.

Through these measures, the Forum’s legacy will extend far beyond the five days in Cape Town, ensuring that the ACWAY Youth Interfaith Forum 2025 serves as a catalyst for enduring interfaith collaboration, youth empowerment, and meaningful global engagement.



## 12. Contact

### Contact details

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ACWAY – A Common Word Among the Youth

