



# IMPACT REPORT

JULY 2019 - JUNE 2020

*Prepared by Liliia Khasanova, ACWAY Admin Team*

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# Overview

A Common Word Among the Youth (ACWAY) is a global youth movement that brings together young changemakers from diverse backgrounds who are committed to interfaith action and peacebuilding. ACWAY seeks to increase the understanding of different faiths and cultures, promote peace and coexistence, and develop the skills and capacity of young changemakers to take local action on issues within their own communities. ACWAY has held past forums in Morocco (2015), Australia (2016), Sudan (2017), and most recently Azerbaijan (2019). This report summarizes the impact from the 2019 Forum's program and evaluations, the activities performed by ACWAY fellows after the Forum as well as internal ACWAY engagement activities.

## FORUM 2019 HIGHLIGHTS

The fourth ACWAY Forum in Baku brought together over 100 international and local youth. After a rigorous selection process from over 1100 applications 49 international ACWAY delegates representing 35 countries were selected to participate in the Forum.

## ACTIVITIES HIGHLIGHTS

ACWAY fellows implemented 16 activities in 13 countries with more than 850 beneficiaries in local communities. ACWAY participated in the UN World International Harmony Week for the fourth time, delivering 9 activities in 9 countries under the banner of #Taking the Lead.

## INTERNAL ENGAGEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

After the Baku Forum, several fellow-led initiatives were started. "ACWAY Fellow Talks" as a series of regular webinars for ACWAY fellows were launched with the aim of promoting collaboration, resource sharing, skill-building and support in between ACWAY Forums. As of June 2020, 3 webinars have been implemented on different topics. Another initiative is the internal Newsletter which highlights ACWAY fellows and their activities and has been released twice this year.

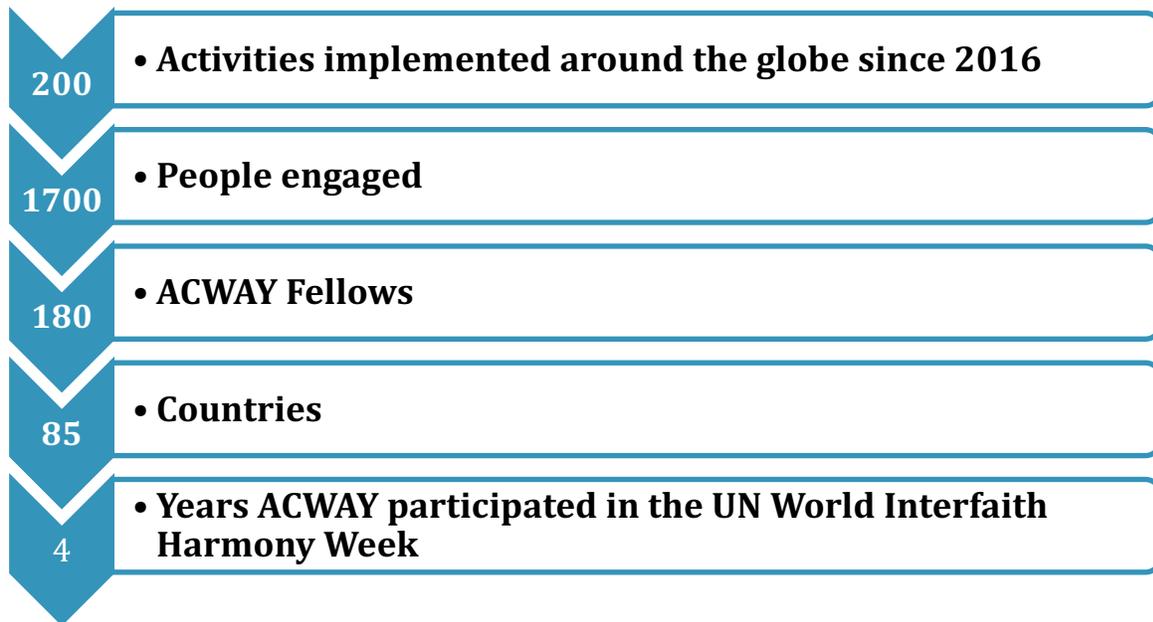
This year has been very fruitful and impactful with forums, activities and new fellows joining the interfaith movement. The global COVID-19 pandemic did bring some of our activities to a halt in the last quarter as the world went into lockdown. The pandemic has also made us adjust our plans for 2020-21 as we find ways to continue serving the community especially in these difficult times.

Rawaad Mahyub

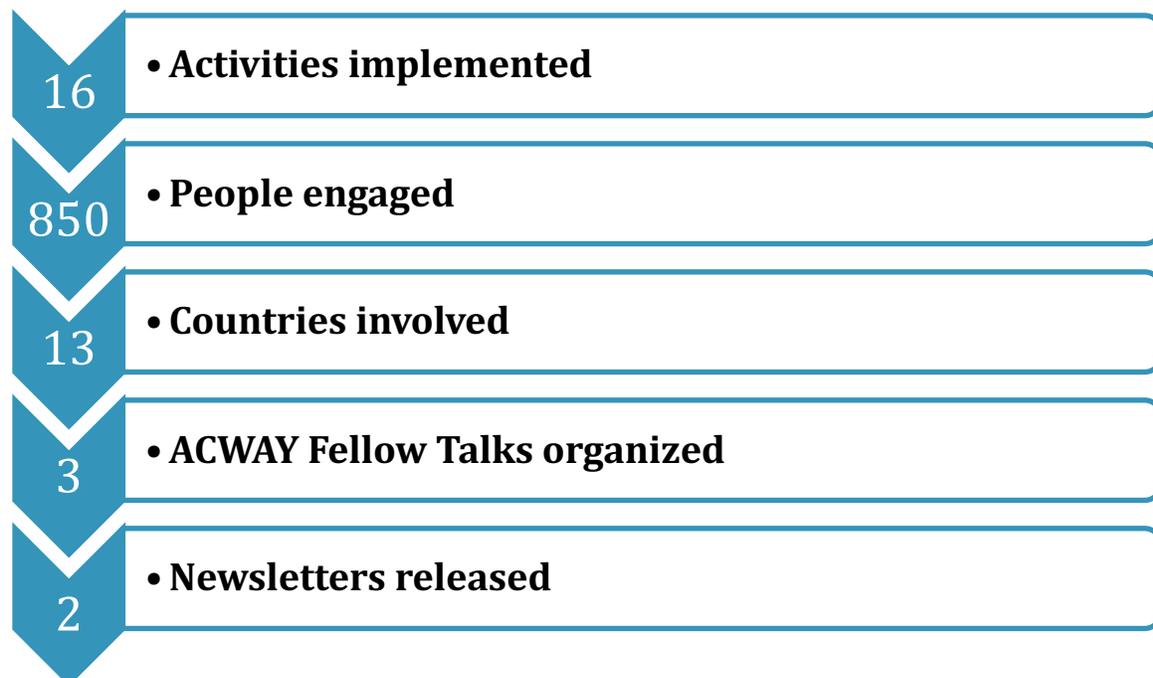
Managing Director

July 26, 2020

## ACWAY in numbers



## SINCE BAKU FORUM [JULY 2019]



## ACWAY Forum 2019 in Baku [July 15-21]

### LOCATION & VENUE

Baku Congress Center, Azerbaijan.

### DIVERSE ATTENDANCE

After a competitive application process that ran from March 30 – April 20, 2019, we received over 1100 applications for new ACWAY fellows to attend the Baku Forum.

In total, over 100 people attended the full Forum with **47 international ACWAY Fellows coming from 33 countries** (2 fellows from the initial 49 chosen were no longer able to travel to the Forum).

Breakdown of the 47 international fellows

- 18 new ACWAY Members from application process
- 14 existing ACWAY fellows
- 15 friends of Azerbaijan
- 57% aged 18-25 years
- 43% aged 26-35 years old
- 42% males & 58% females
- Over 10 faiths and traditions represented
- 33 countries represented

### PROGRAM

With the Baku International Forum serving as ACWAY's Fourth Forum, a special emphasis was placed on skill-building and training for ACWAY participants. The ACWAY planning team sought to create an opportunity for participants to contextualize the concepts of multiculturalism and interfaith harmony into practice. Over the course of the Forum, participants engaged in skills-based workshops and critical dialogue around interfaith action: this included discussing challenges, lessons learned, and best practices.

During the Forum, there were multiple trainings and sessions, including:

- ACWAY Project Planning sessions (ACWAY team)
- Dialogue for Peace training (by guest trainer)
- Context Matters: Doing Interfaith in Diverse Spaces (ACWAY Fellows)
- Religion and Conflict Resolution (by guest trainer)
- Open Space (ACWAY Fellows)
- An Intergenerational Conversation Learning in & Looking Forward (ACWAY Team)
- Religion, Technology, and Youth: The Future of Interfaith (ACWAY Fellows)
- Respectful Cross-Cultural Engagement (by guest trainer)



Baku International Multicultural Centre also offered several programs, which included:

- Multiculturalism in Azerbaijan
- Meetings with local civil society leaders
- The role of youth in intercultural dialogue
- Spreading terrorist and violent extremist content through technology
- Various excursions and site visits
- “Present your Nation” Cultural Night

### PARTNERSHIP WORKING

- Baku International Multiculturalism Centre
- Young Friends of Azerbaijan
- Youth Foundation of the Republic of Azerbaijan
- We the World
- Stirling Foundation
- KAICIID Dialogue Centre

### EVALUATION

Over 60% of the participants completed the surveys.

- ACWAY Project Planning sessions
  - Relevance: 90%
  - Usefulness: 90%
- Context Matters: Doing Interfaith in Diverse Spaces:
  - Relevance: 96%
  - Usefulness 92%
- ACWAY Open Space:
  - Relevance: 82%
  - Usefulness: 80%
- Religion, Technology and Youth: The Future of Interfaith
  - Relevance: 94%
  - Usefulness: 85%

## TESTIMONIALS AND FEEDBACK

### Participant comments:

- “The forum and cultural activities were amazing. I never felt so at home in an event like I did on this one, since it motivated me to keep going and gave me inspiration from other people to enhance projects that I already have and create new ones.”
- “I loved my time in Azerbaijan! Special thanks to the organizers who did 100% amazing work! Perfect lectures, incredible tours, convenient accommodation and tasty food-all these things became possible as a result of organizer`s sincere wish and efforts. I loved the atmosphere of unity and tolerance between the tour members!”
- “The mix of plenary sessions, interactive sessions and visits has been perfect.”
- “I loved how diverse the ACWAY forum was and how the diverse ideas were all considered throughout all the sessions.”

### Forum Highlights:

- “It was an informative forum getting to understand the works around interfaith/multiculturalism, how to plan and carry out a project, monitoring and evaluation process.”
- “Learning about project creation and implementation. Getting the opportunity to develop the foundations for our own projects in the venue. Meeting with people in the same field and learning about how they implemented their own projects.”
- “I would like to highlight the presentations given by active ACWAY fellows. They are a great source of inspiration for me! It is very nice when there is less theory but more practice! Another thing which I would like to mark are the Cultural Nights. It is a perfect way to learn more about each other`s countries and wipe out the barriers between us!”
- “The highlight of the forum for me was learning 3 things: 1) Bring people in instead of pushing them out. 2) Before you can do good, be a good person. 3) See the humanity in others.”
- “The project planning sessions for ACWAY were the most useful. In addition, the times we were able to chat about real issues faced in different communities around the world were very engaging and enlightening conversations.”

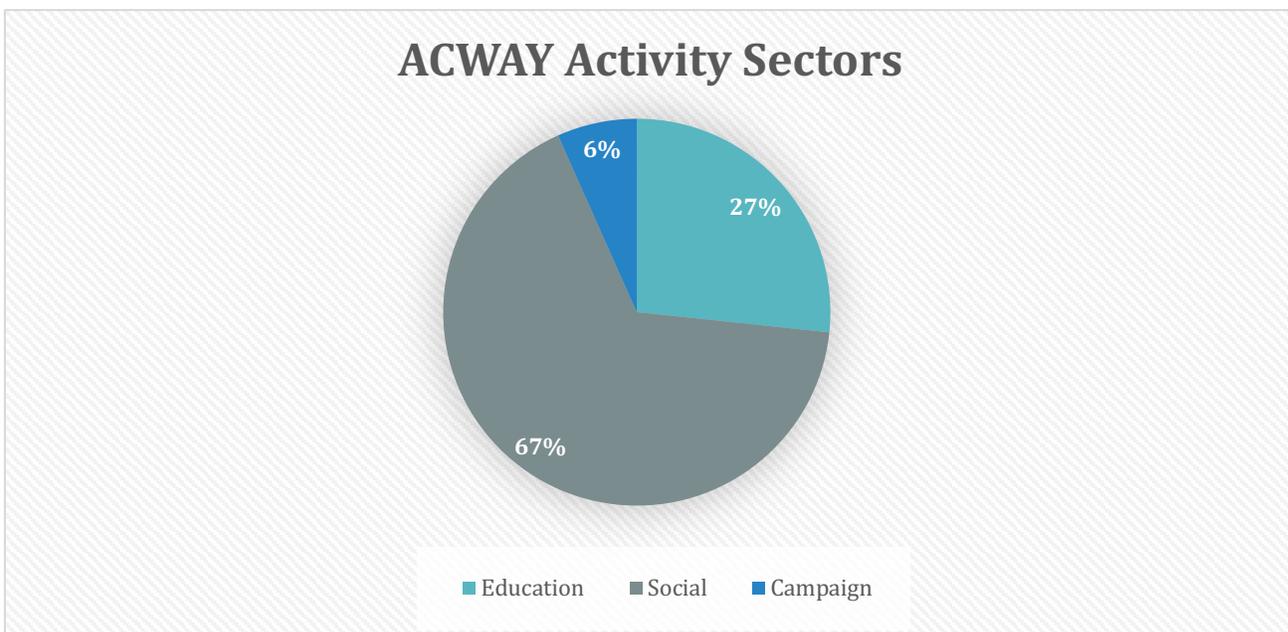
### Has your attendance at the Forum benefitted you? If so, how?

- “YES - in that it has been an educative, learnt a lot from other people and collaborated young people from around the world...it has taught me to be more tolerant and respect other people.”
- “It definitely has. Not only did it allow me to connect with other like-minded individuals and learn from them, but it has allowed me to tap into sources of creativity and project planning that I did not know that I possessed.”
- “My prior knowledge and intuitive understanding of intercultural exchange has been challenged and was enriched by many new experiences and learnings. I will be able to draw a lot from these in the future. Both my professional career as well as my volunteer work will greatly profit from that.”

## Overview of activities implemented by ACWAY fellows since July 2019

### NUMBERS

- 16** activities were implemented by fellows after the Baku Forum
- 13** countries involved
- 23** local partners involved
- 850** people engaged



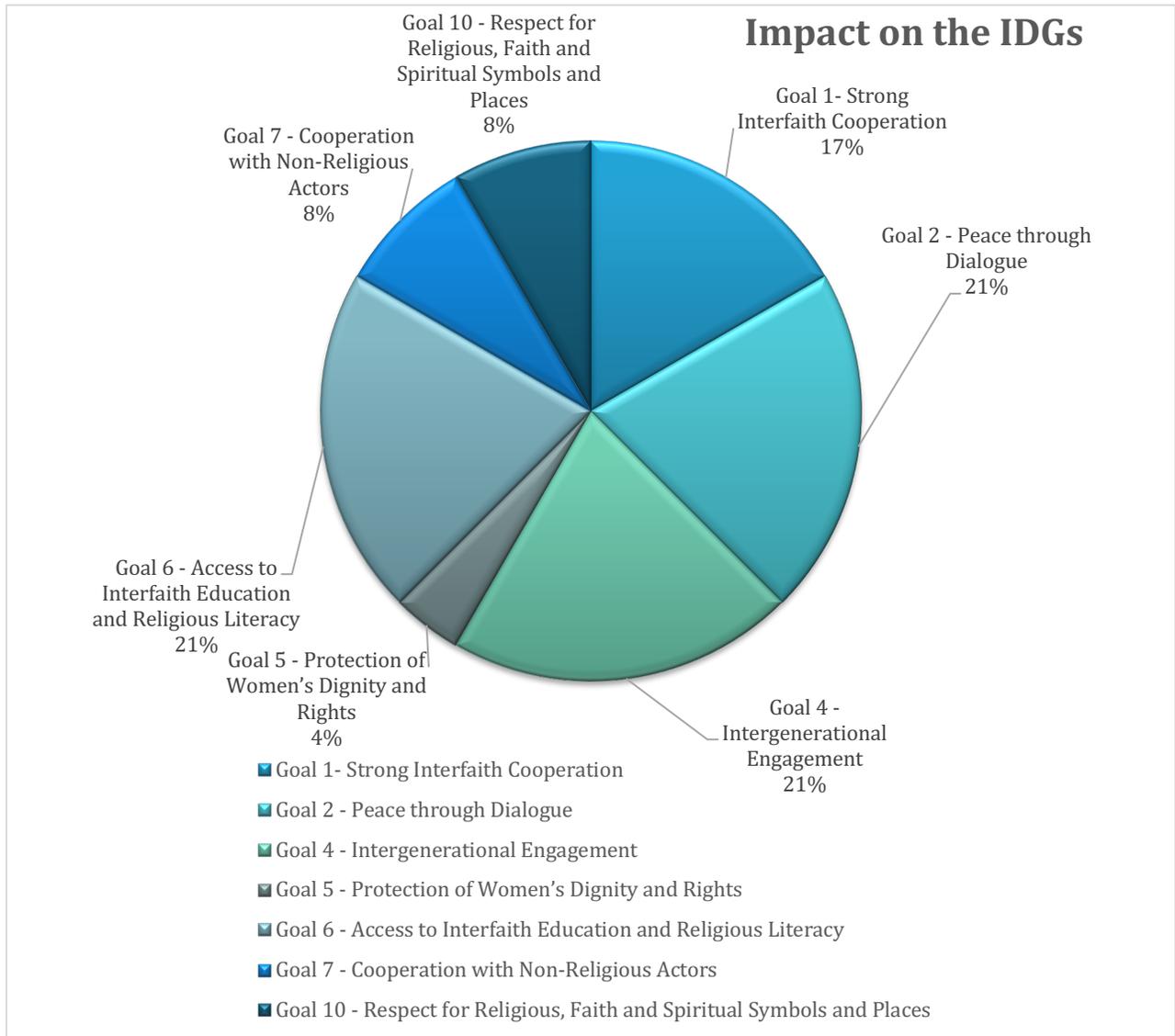
## ACTIVITIES & INTERFAITH DEVELOPMENT GOALS (IDGS)<sup>1</sup>

The Interfaith Development Goals (IDGs) were developed over two and half years by ACWAY Fellows with support from senior leaders. The IDGs were developed to capture and demonstrate how religious, faith, spiritual and interfaith groups, their communities and leaders contribute to building peace and harmony around the world. The activities implemented by ACWAY Fellows are aligned with one or more of the IDGs, thus making a more coordinated approach to interfaith action and with time allowing us to measure the impact of our work and a tool for others in the sector to do so too.



<sup>1</sup> For the full text please refer to *Annex 1*

Since the Baku Forum in July 2019, the activities delivered contributed to advance the following IDGs:



In 2019-2020, ACWAY activities advanced mainly Goal 2 - Peace through Dialogue (21%), Goal 4 – Intergenerational Engagement (21%), and Goal 6 - Access to Interfaith and Religious Literacy (21%). At least three activities were aiming for strong interfaith cooperation (17%). Goals 3, 8, and 9 were underrepresented.

## BRIEF OF ACTIVITIES IMPLEMENTED BY ACWAY FELLOWS

### Jornadas Interreligiosas Aug 30, 2019 (Mexico)



- An event was organized by ACWAY Fellow Elias Gonzalez in Mexico
- Participants were around 300 high school students, male and female, Atheist, Catholic, Non-religious
- The talk was targeted on combating indifference and ignorance about religious diversity and interfaith work



## Seekr

September 14, 2019

(USA)



seek. find. grow

- Seekr, launched by our fellow Skyler Oberst, is a mobile service that simplifies the search for a spiritual community by providing a meaningful user experience for those who wish to explore the religious landscape and houses of worship in their area
- An innovative App addresses the difficulty of finding spiritual resources and exploring the interfaith/interreligious landscape of communities by applying tech solutions.
- Seekr has been downloaded hundreds of times and our web traffic on a weekly basis is several thousand sessions (average weekly page views: 5920; user sessions: 2178).
- Using Seekr's platform, houses of worship are able to more easily find one another and partner on shared community service projects

*"I believe that the future of the interfaith movement lies in our generation's ability to innovate and disrupt current markets and sectors."*

*"I have been blessed with a unique opportunity to apply my interfaith knowledge and training directly to audiences that have never come into contact with this concept. I have been able to show people the importance of interfaith and learned invaluable lessons about leadership, sustainable project management and budgeting/fundraising strategies. These tools are in great demand for many young people who are doing interfaith work. I am excited to have had the chance to learn them and look forward to sharing them with my ACWAY family to help further the work we have to do".*

*- Skyler Oberst, ACWAY Fellow*

## Ethiopian Youth Talk about Human Rights, Peace and Harmony, December 21, 2019 (Ethiopia)



- The event was organized By ACWAY Fellow Kalewongel Tesfaye
- Forum included performances and talks. More that 50 young people aged 25-30 participated from different religious backgrounds: Orthodox christian, Muslim, Protestant, Catholic Christian, atheists.
- Participants received an overview on situation in the country in relation with Human right and Peace



## Interreligious Dialogue: Listening to Learn February 5, 2020 (Cameroon)

- In the context of Cameroon National Youth Week, ACWAY Fellow, Clement Ngueto, organized a dialogue session.
- The dialogue session introduced various groups to the importance of interfaith dialogue/work in local communities in Africa.
- The event hosted participants from diverse cultures and faiths in Santchou, Cameroon.
- Participants learned to actively listen to each other's stories and shared values of love and peace.



*"During our follow up in the community after the activity was done, I witnessed the relationships of trust from the dialogue session. A peace building and dialogue club has started in the community by the youth, for youth and mentored by my team."*

*– Clement Ngueto, ACWAY Fellow*

*"People are naturally flexible to connect to others if they are well understood, they will be respected in friendship without any stereotypes".*

*– Herve Ewane, participant*

## Interreligious Dialogue & Women : Promoting Harmony February 7, 2020 (Sri Lanka)

*“I was very happy that the majority of participants affirmed that this was their first time to engage with other faith communities and expressed the willingness to participate in future related events”.*

*– Nishantha Kumana, ACWAY Member*



- The event was delivered by an ACWAY Member, Nishantha Kumara.
- The event brought together 17 women from Buddhist and Islamic communities.
- The aim was to host a dialogue session about the role of women in promoting social cohesion in their communities

## Better Together Days: Storytelling & Service February 19, 2020 ( USA)

- The activity "Better Together Days" was organized by our fellow Kjersten Adams
- The event was held in Utah, United States.
- The gathering consisted of diverse storytelling, speaking about the idea of service and sharing a light intercultural dinner.
- The gathering focused on the learning about the values we share across religions.
- Participants learned each other's interfaith stories and connected about values we share across religions. We also collectively made 15 blankets and donated them to Helping Hands International to distribute to refugees.



*"For me it was important that many participants learned they aren't alone in their thoughts, beliefs, and feelings about interfaith work. They also learned that there is a supportive community for them even if they aren't part of the dominant religion in the area or if they no longer identify with that religion."*

*– Kjersten Adams, ACWAY Fellow*

## Promoting Interfaith Dialogue and Social Harmony through Sports February 21, 2020 ( Zambia)



- The event was organized by ACWAY Fellow Maria Daka
- It addressed the current ritual killing, human gassing and mob justice that Zambia is facing in almost every province.
- More than 200 people participated: religious leaders, school pupils, teachers and community members took part.
- The project resulted in people becoming well informed and enlightened about the issue, reminded the importance of love and peace and what religion says about love, contributed towards breaking stereotypes, people became more informed and open minded despite their differences.
- Please watch [this](#) video for more info.

*“The project made me realize that overcoming fear and taking the lead to mobilize the community to address conflicting issues affecting yields positive results as it involves participation from different stakeholders.”*

*– Maria Daka, ACWAY Fellow*

## Interfaith Retreat

February 21-23, 2020 (Mexico)



- In Guadalajara, ACWAY Fellow, Elias González organized an interfaith retreat in Chantepec , Jalisco, México.
- The event was attended by 19 participants from 7 different religions.
- Participants took part in several inter activities:  
participating in Shabbat; sharing

canticles for all the traditions, and talking about personal experiences as practitioners in each tradition.

*Just some weeks after the interfaith retreat, the covid-19 arrived to Mexico. Guadalajara, the city where all this religious people live, in today the hot spot of the pandemic. What this interfaith group did is amazing: instead of just lock themselves out of the world, they are using the kitchen of an Hindu restaurant in order to cook free vegetarian food for the people that are sleeping outside the hospitals waiting for new about their sick relatives. This have been going on for almost 3 months, and you can see Hindu, Christians, Jews, Atheists, Buddhists, etc. working together cooking and sharing food all over the city.*

*- Elias González, ACWAY Fellow*

## Green Peaceful Weekend February 22, 2020 ( Madagascar )

- Organized by ACWAY Fellow Tsiry Randrianavelo The Green Peaceful Weekend gathered 180 people from the ages of 3 to 70.
- The event focused on an activity called "seed of peace planting".
- As a consequence of the encounter, 2500 "peace" seeds were planted and the participants were trained in medicinal trees identification.
- The group also engaged in activities regarding awareness of peace concepts



The poster for the Green Peaceful Weekend event features the Move up logo at the top. Below it, the text reads "Vous invite à participer au Green Peaceful WEEKEND". The event schedule is listed as follows: 01 Reboisement, 02 Formation en fabrication de compost, seed of peace et charbon vert, and 03 Peace game. The location is Ambohimanambola, Tanàna, and the date is Samedi 22 février 2020. The starting point is Ambohijatovo à 8h, with a bus fare (PAF) of 2000Ar, and a note about bringing a snack, smile, and hat. The poster also includes logos for various partners: Mieux Communiqué, ACWAY, GreenNKeat, Graine de vie, Agricole, and D13. A large illustration of a tree with a peace symbol in its leaves is on the right. At the bottom, it says "Inscription gratuite sur" followed by contact information: 0340394456 / moveupmadagascar@outlook.com and www.facebook.com/moveup.mg.



## Intercultural sharing

### February 29, 2020 ( Germany)

- This event was organized by ACWAY Fellow Sibiu Szymanowska.
- It addressed the lack of interest and misconceptions towards other faiths that people generally have in Germany.
- The event provided a safe space where people could open up about their religious background and share experiences and knowledge.
- About half of the participants belong to the temple where the event was held. The other half was composed of Muslims, Christians, Agnostics and Atheists.



## ACWAY internal engagement activities

### ACWAY FELLOW TALKS

ACWAY Fellow Talks is a series of online webinars with the aim of promoting collaboration, resource sharing, skill-building and support in between ACWAY Forums. This initiative is an opportunity for fellows around the world to connect without barriers and help build ACWAY's vision of a growing, inclusive interfaith community.

This is fellow-designed and fellow-led initiative. The series was initiated and led by ACWAY fellows Sara Rahim (USA), Uzair Ben Ebrahim (South Africa) and Jana Jacob (Sweden).

Fellow Talks are hosted on the first Sundays of every second month starting from February 2020. To date, there were 3 successful editions:

#### 1. "Engaging Institutions: Leveraging Principles and Practice" on February 2, 2020

Participating countries included: USA, Argentina, Cameroon, Mexico, Zambia, Czech Republic, UK, Indonesia & South Africa. Participants noted that a lot of useful information and tools were discussed for their event planning for the United Nations World Interfaith Harmony Week 2020.

The poster features the ACWAY logo at the top left with the tagline "A Common Word Among the Youth". To the right, it says "Fellow Talks Webinar Series | 2020" and "A fellow-designed and fellow-led initiative". The main title is "UNITED NATIONS WORLD INTERFAITH HARMONY WEEK Engaging Institutions Leveraging Principles and Practice". The date and time are "SUNDAY, 2 FEBRUARY / 16:00-17:30 GMT". A note at the bottom left provides contact information for Sara Rahim. On the right, three speakers are listed with their photos: Miriam Quezada (Program & Communications Manager, Parliament of the World's Religions, USA), Sarah Oliver (Global Youth Coordinator, United Religions Initiative, South Africa), and Sara Rahim (ACWAY Fellow, USA). The bottom of the poster includes logos for World Interfaith Harmony Week, Parliament of the World's Religions, URI, and Interfaith, along with social media handles and the website info@acway.org.

## 2. “Holding Community during uncertain times” on April 5, 2020

This conversation was an informal opportunity to virtually connect, support one another, and share ways in which we can all uplift ourselves and our impacted communities at the time of COVID-19.

**ACWAY** **Fellow Talks**  
Webinar Series | 2020  
A Common Word Among the Youth A fellow-designed and fellow-led initiative

### HOLDING COMMUNITY DURING UNCERTAIN TIMES

Fellows' Check-In

This will not be a "talk", but a deeply held space to share, be heard and listen to others.

This conversation will be an informal opportunity to virtually connect, support one another, and share ways in which we can all uplift ourselves and our impacted communities at this time.

SUNDAY 05 APRIL 2020 90MIN  
11:00 CST 16:00 GMT 23:00 WIB

ZOOM LINK <https://zoom.us/j/920386866>

If you would like more information, contact Sara Rahim: [sarahim06@gmail.com](mailto:sarahim06@gmail.com)

[info@acway.org](mailto:info@acway.org) [f @ACWAYProject](https://www.facebook.com/ACWAYProject) [i @acwayofficial](https://www.instagram.com/acwayofficial) [t @ACWAYProject](https://twitter.com/ACWAYProject)



### 3. Fundraising: Art and Science on June 7, 2020

Guest speaker Irshad Osman shared his expertise on Fundraising for community actions. We learned that Fundraising is easier than it seems if you approach it in a systematic way. We looked into several important questions among which were: How to identify your donors? What qualifications of donors are important? How to solicit and how to sustain relationships. 11 countries represented: Canada, USA, South Africa, Sweden, Russia, UK, Kenya, Cameroon, Czech Republic, Indonesia, and Singapore.

**ACWAY**  
A Common Word Among the Youth  
**Fellow Talks**

A fellow-designed and fellow-led initiative

# Fundraising

## Art & Science

In conversation with  
**Irshad Osman**  
Imam, Lecturer & Fundraiser  
Canada



Sunday, 07 June 2020  
10:00 CST | 15:00 GMT | 22:00 WIB  
Zoom link provided in the Fellows Info Guide  
Email [sarahim06@gmail.com](mailto:sarahim06@gmail.com) to RSVP

ACWAY Fellow Talks Webinar Series | 2020

 [info@acway.org](mailto:info@acway.org)  [@ACWAYProject](https://www.facebook.com/ACWAYProject)  [@acwayofficial](https://www.instagram.com/acwayofficial)  [@ACWAYProject](https://twitter.com/ACWAYProject)

# NEWSLETTER

The Newsletter is another fellow-led initiative that was initiated after the Baku Forum. As of June, two newsletters have been released, updating ACWAY community on selected activities implemented by ACWAY Fellows, latest interfaith news and opportunities. Both newsletters are available separately.

1<sup>st</sup> edition, January 2020

January 2020 | 1st edition

## ACWAY

A Common Word Among the Youth

### INTERNAL NEWSLETTER

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#### ACWAY Forum 4 Baku Intercultural Youth Forum 2019: Interfaith in Action

BAKU, 15-21 JULY 2019

A big shout out to all those who were a part of our 4th Forum, that took place in Baku, Azerbaijan. Being the result of a partnership between ACWAY, Baku International Multiculturalism Center, Stirling Foundation, Young Friends of Azerbaijan and Youth Foundation of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Forum gathered more than 100 attendees and welcomed 14 new ACWAY members. The 7-day fully funded program provided the attendees with skills-based workshops about interfaith action, dialogue and conflict resolution. Participants also participated in the 9th edition of the International Summer School of Multiculturalism, which included excursions and sessions about multiculturalism in Azerbaijan.

#### BAKU FORUM IN NUMBERS

- 100 Attendees
- 47 ACWAY fellows
- 33 Countries represented
- 10+ Different faiths and traditions represented





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#### New ACWAY Executive Committee Team

						
Head of Marketing	Head of Partnerships	Executive Director	Head of M&E	Head of Programs	Head of Admin	Head of Finance
Brazil	Russia	UK	Indonesia	USA	Russia	Argentina

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#### New ACWAY activities delivered!

##### JORNADAS INTERRELIGIOSAS | La Marquesa, Mexico

Alberto Elias Gonzalez implemented an interfaith activity in the region of La Marquesa forest, Mexico. Entitled "Jornadas Interreligiosas", the activity focused in introducing interfaith topics to almost 300 high school students of Prepa Ibero High School. It was part of a bigger three-day event called "Jornadas Ignacianas".

##### ETHIOPIAN YOUTH TALK | Addis Abeba, Ethiopia

Kalewengel Tesfaye implemented an interfaith activity in the Embassy of Indonesia in Ethiopia. Entitled "Ethiopian Youth Talk about Human Rights, Peace and Harmony", the activity counted with more than 70 attendees and focused in introducing the themes of human rights, peace and interfaith harmony to the youth.

### ACWAY REPRESENTATION IN INTERNATIONAL EVENTS

Between July and December 2019, ACWAY has been represented at three international events



#### Religions for Peace 10th World Assembly

Lindau, Germany

Between 20-23 August 2019, the fellows Liya Olig, Mandalar Zan, Azizah Matik, Anja Fahlenkamp and Andrew Liza have been present at one of the world's most representative and multi-religious gathering of religious communities. They were able to contribute and make suggestions for the assembly commitment in topics such as protection of the earth, sustainable and integral human development, and preventing and transforming conflict.



#### 7th meeting of the Istanbul Process

The Hague, Netherlands

Between 18-19 November 2019, Jolya Sou and Liya Khananova have represented ACWAY at the event. Jolya Sou had the opportunity to share her ACWAY activity Project Inspire as a speaker at the panel devoted to the role of media in combating hate speech. ACWAY was also presented at the marketplace among leading youth organizations working with interfaith issues.



#### 1st World Non-formal Education Forum

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Between 9-11th December 2019, ACWAY's Executive Director, Rawad Mahjub, was invited to present ACWAY & its Interfaith Development Goals (IDG) initiative at the Global Goals Stage. Examples of ACWAY's activities were also presented at the Forum's Marketplace. The Forum was organized by WOSK, UNICEF, UNIPA and the UN SG Envoy on Youth.

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### Our fellows around the globe

During last months, our fellows have been doing amazing things concerning interfaith around the world. Check it out!



#### Salt Lake City, USA

Alyme Scirkovich and Kjersten Adams have made a project planning meeting in order to plan the next activities they are going to implement together.



#### Capetown, South Africa

Utair Ibrahim and Rawad Mahjub have met in Capetown to discuss the ACWAY engagement strategy and future opportunities to engage ACWAY fellows.

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#### Las Vegas, USA

Skyler Oberst and Elias Gonzalez have participated at NAIN (North American Interfaith Network) Retreat - an event that gathers young leaders to think and meditate about interfaith as part of their network.



#### Addis Abeba, Ethiopia

Maria Daka has participated at the iDove interfaith conference on engaging communities in the fight against violent extremism, organized by the African Union.

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ACWAY Impact Report 2019-20

# 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, June 2020

July 2020 | 2<sup>nd</sup> edition

## ACWAY A Common Word Among the Youth INTERNAL NEWSLETTER

### UN World Interfaith Harmony Week 2020 February 1-7, 2020



For the past four years, ACWAY has taken part in UN World Interfaith Harmony Week, which takes place during the first week of February each year. This year, ACWAY fellows conducted 37 voluntary interfaith activities under the common theme **#TakingTheLead**. Our fellows organized their events across 13 countries, initiating interfaith and intercultural activities related to a range of topics including spirituality, environmentalism, information technology, technical skill building, gender, social action/service, storytelling, and using sports as a tool for social change. Our team submitted a summary report that will be included in the UN WHI's Annual Report. If you would like to help us plan for next year's WHIW, please email [info@acway.org](mailto:info@acway.org) (with the subject Re: 'WHiW 2021').

#### UNWHiW 2020 IN NUMBERS

- 37 Activities achieved
- 13 Countries represented

### ACWAY activities implemented during UNWHiW 2020



**2-Feb-2020**  
**WEBINAR: ENGAGING INSTITUTIONS** | USA & South Africa  
Sara Rahim & Izzy Ben Ebrahimi organized an online webinar as part of ACWAY Fellow Talks entitled "UN World Interfaith Harmony Week, Engaging Institutions: Leveraging Principles and Practices." This event included speakers from the Parliament of the World's Religions and United Religions Initiative. Participating countries included: USA, Argentina, Cameroon, Mexico, Zambia, Czech Republic, UK, Indonesia & South Africa.



**5-Feb-2020**  
**INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE: LISTENING TO LEARN** | Cameroon  
In the context of Cameroon National Youth Week, our fellow Clement Nguro organized a dialogue session in which he shared out the importance of listening and building relationships in interfaith work. This event included participants from diverse cultures and faiths in Sancho, Cameroon.



**7-Feb-2020**  
**INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE & WOMEN** | Sri Lanka  
The event, titled "Women Engagement in Promoting Social Harmony through Inter-Religious Dialogues", was delivered by ACWAY member Noharika Kumara and included 17 women from Buddhist and Islamic communities. The aim of this event was to emphasize the role of women in promoting social cohesion in their communities. The majority of participants affirmed that this was their first time engaging with other faith communities and expressed the willingness to participate in future related events.



**19-Feb-2020**  
**BETTER TOGETHER DAYS** | USA  
In partnership with the BYU Interfaith Club and UVU Interfaith Student Council, the activity "Better Together Days" was organized by our fellow Kiersten Adams. This event took place in Utah, United States. Composed of storytelling, Service, and dinner, the activity focused on the learning about the values we share across religions, and participants made blankets for refugees.



**21/23-Feb-2020**  
**INTERFAITH RETREAT** | Mexico  
In Guadalajara, ACWAY Fellow Eliza Gonzalez organized an interfaith retreat in Chantepac, Jalisco, Mexico. The event was attended by 19 participants from 7 different religions. Participants took part in several interfaith activities, participating in Shabbat, sharing scriptures from each tradition, and sharing personal experiences from each tradition.



**21-Feb-2020**  
**PROMOTING INTERFAITH THROUGH SPORT** | Zambia  
The event was organized by ACWAY Fellow Maria Daka. It addressed the issues of human rights, mob justice, and vandalism against government infrastructure that Zambia is facing in almost every province. More than 200 people including religious leaders, school students, teachers, and community members took part in "Promoting Interfaith Through Sport". The project raised awareness on these issues and allowed participants to focus on breaking down stereotypes and focus on bridge building.



**22-Feb-2020**  
**GREEN PEACEFUL WEEKEND** | Madagascar  
Organized by our fellow Taro Randrianarisoa, the Green Peaceful Weekend gathered 180 people from the ages of 5 to 70 in Madagascar. The event focused on an activity called "Seed of Peace planting". In this event, over 2500 seeds were planted and the participants were treated in medicinal trees identification. The group also completed activities to raise their own awareness of peacebuilding efforts.



**2-Feb-2020**  
**INTERCULTURAL SHARING** | Germany  
This event was organized by ACWAY Fellow Sibyl Szymonowska. It addressed the lack of interest and misconceptions towards other faiths that people generally have in Germany. The event provided a safe space where people could open up about their religious background and share experiences and knowledge. About half of the participants belong to the temple where the event was held. The other half was comprised of Muslims, Christians, Agnostics and Atheists.

### The outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic

How is ACWAY reacting to the consequences of the virus?

In the midst of March, the world flipped on its head. We found ourselves in the wake of a pandemic, impacting all corners of the globe. ACWAY's mission has always been rooted in making global change through local action, and our fellows have been doing what they can to support their communities - so we felt it was important to check in with our fellows.

While national, regional, and international ACWAY events are indefinitely on hold, we are engaging with each other through informal hangouts - **ACWAY Fellow Talks** - and other forms of virtual communication. During our last ACWAY Fellow Talk on April 5th, we shared stories of kindness, examples of activism during the pandemic, personal challenges, and supported each other from different corners of the world.

The ACWAY Executive Committee is monitoring the situation, and we are saddened to say that our **5th International Forum** that was scheduled to take place later this year has been postponed hopefully to early next year. Stay tuned, stay active, and stay healthy!

### Our fellows around the globe

Our fellows have shared how they (and their religious or intercultural communities) are dealing with COVID-19 outbreak during these tough times. Check it out!

Carolina Yagas | Catholic, Argentina



"When the world began to suffer from this pandemic, I realized that it would be necessary to join forces and help our community. With my local church, we worked to identify urgent problems and go out to help. Each young volunteer has been assigned 5 people to assist and help, we visit them twice a week. Also, along with the Jewish community, we collected food donations to deliver to the community centers in our city. In these times I consider that it is extremely important that we succeed with the ones in risk and in need, collaborating and cooperating with the different religious institutions in our neighborhood."



Rawaad Mahyub | Muslim, UK

"In my local community, 5 mosques and community centers came together to organize a food pack delivery project for vulnerable people and care workers across Birmingham. Deliveries are made throughout the day, not by volunteers from different backgrounds, races and religions. The project involves donating food items, sorting, storage, washing, and packaging to requests, cooking food and delivering to people's homes - all under strict distancing guidelines. There are so many different stories, from old people living by themselves and just having someone think of them and make, albeit short, contact was clearly a wonderful moment. By using volunteer workers that struggle to find time because they too see out there helping others above and beyond their duty. Clearly COVID-19 has brought to the surface what was hidden for some, difficult for others and uncomfortable for most. I have been grateful to play a small part in this community outreach service, an obligation as we all have a right to see the ones we receive. We are indeed only filling in for what the state should provide in the long term."



Alyson Zacharoff | Jewish, USA

"One of the most important principles in Judaism is pikuach nefesh, which means you can break almost any religious rule to save a life. Fortunately, this means that many Jewish communities in the US recognized very quickly the need to do more in crisis events when the pandemic erupted in March. Strangely enough, the Jewish world went online and we all suddenly had access to Jewish worship services and learning opportunities from here and from around the world. Many congregations have actually even seen greater numbers of people attending needs, as people seek connection during this time. However, for those Jewish communities that refrain from using technology on holidays, the challenges faced under quarantine are amplified by their inability to virtually connect on holy days. But throughout, there has been a true effort to be creative throughout this unique newest in time."



### ACWAY FELLOW TALKS

'ACWAY Fellow Talks' is a fellow-designed and fellow-led initiative that was launched in January 2020 with collective efforts from ACWAY fellows **Uzair Ben Ebrahim, Jana Jakob, and Sara Rahim**.

It is a 2020 program with the aim of promoting collaboration, resource sharing, and virtual community amongst ACWAY Fellows in between in-person gatherings.

ACWAY Fellows are often buzzing with motivation and new ideas. Our hope is that ACWAY Fellow Talks will be an easily accessible opportunity for fellows around the world to be part of a growing, inclusive interfaith community.

Between February and June 2020, ACWAY fellows had the opportunity to participate in the following fellow talks:



AFT #1 - 02 Feb 2020

**Engaging Institutions: Leveraging Principles and Practice**  
On this call we heard from **Miriam Quezada**, who leads the UN campaign with the world's oldest interfaith organization, Parliament of the World's Religions. We also heard from **Sarah Oliver**, Global Youth Coordinator at United Religions Initiative and member of Cape Town Interfaith Initiative, which won 1st place in **UNWHiW** in 2019. During this talk, our speakers shared best practices for designing winning campaigns and opportunities for young people to help shape the interfaith movement in intergenerational spaces.

AFT #2 - 05 Apr 2020  
**Holding Community Together During Uncertain Times**

Our second Fellow Talk, held in April, focused on holding space during these uncertain times. Fellows from **12 countries** were present on the call and shared out how they are responding to the COVID-19 pandemic in their countries and communities, as well as where we are seeing unlikely collaborations and practicing self-care.



AFT #3 - 07 Jun 2020  
**Fundraising - Art & Science**

Our third ACWAY Fellow Talk focused on how to raise funds for interfaith projects. It was an interactive training and workshop with host Clement, fundraise and imam. During this session, fellows were able to learn about the donor cycle and motivations for giving, to align your mission with donor intent, the framework of stewardship, and the elements of a successful grant proposal.

### WHAT IS NEXT?

What to expect from ACWAY in the next few months?

#### New ACWAY Website

We are excited to share that we are in the final stages of developing our new website. It will be a user friendly and streamlined page that includes the past work of fellows and Forums. Stay tuned to see our new site.

#### ACWAY Fellow Talks (AFT)

As announced in our last newsletter, AFT is an initiative that is going to happen on the first Sunday of every second month to talk about different topics. Between now and December, three more Fellow Talks are programmed to happen on the following dates: **2 August, 6 October and 6 December**. Stay connected to your social media for more information!

#### ACWAY Participation in G20 Interfaith Forum 2020

As you may know, ACWAY has been involved with the **G20 Interfaith Forum** (previously called Interfaith Summit and now IF20) since 2015 and as the global youth partner since 2017. This year, the G20 Interfaith Forum is set to take place in Saudi Arabia in mid-October, pending safety of travel. Several ACWAY fellows have been nominated to attend the Forum and pre-Forum consultations. We look forward to sharing more soon!

Want to be featured in the next ACWAY Internal Newsletter?  
Share all of your updates with us at [info@acway.org](mailto:info@acway.org)

- [/ACWAYProject](#)
- [@ACWAYProject](#)
- [@ACWAYOfficial](#)
- <http://acway.org>

## ACWAY representation at International Events (since July 2019)

ACWAY continues to be invited to present at global platforms in the interfaith sector. At these events, ACWAY presents its diverse grass-root activities as well as its flagship initiative the IDGs to promote a more coordinated and collaborative approach to achieving inter-faith coexistence and understanding.



### Religions for Peace 10th World Assembly

 Lindau, Germany

Between 20-23 August 2019, the fellows Laiqa Dilip, Mandalar Zan, Azizah Mutik, Anja Fahlenkamp and Andrew Lesa have been present at one of the world's most representative and multi-religious gathering of religious communities. They were able to contribute and make suggestions for the assembly commitment in topics such as protection of the earth, sustainable and integral human development, and preventing and transforming conflict.



### 7th meeting of the Istanbul Process

 The Hague, Netherlands

Between 18-19 November 2019, Jolyda Sou and Liliya Khasanova have represented ACWAY at the event. Jolyda Sou had the opportunity to share her ACWAY activity Project Inspire as a speaker at the panel devoted to the role of media in combating hate speech. ACWAY was also presented at the marketplace among leading youth organizations working with interfaith issues.



### 1st World Non-formal Education Forum

 Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Between 9-11th December 2019, ACWAY's Executive Director, Rawaad Mahyub, was invited to present ACWAY & its Interfaith Development Goals (IDGs) initiative at the Global Goals Stage. Examples of ACWAY's activities were also presented at the Forum's Marketplace. The Forum was organised by WOSM, UNICEF, UNFPA and the UN SG Envoy on Youth.

Thank you to our Forum partners

## BAKU 2019



## Sudan 2017



## Brisbane 2016



## Rabat 2015



## Annex 1 - IDGs



### **Interfaith Development Goals** <sup>2 3</sup> (ACWAY IDGs)

#### **Introductory statement**

The Interfaith Development Goals are intended to complement the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) where we, the young people of A Common Word Among the Youth (ACWAY), saw a gap. UN SDG16 (peace, justice and strong institutions) addresses essentially political and human rights issues; *abuse, exploitation, trafficking, promoting the rule of law, reducing illicit financial and arms flows, reducing corruption and bribery*, but it does not address inter religious and inter-cultural peace building.

The IDGs were developed to capture and demonstrate how religious, faith, spiritual and interfaith groups, their communities and leaders contribute to building peace and harmony around the world.

ACWAY consists of young people from more than 80 countries around the world, promoting interreligious and intercultural peace and understanding. These IDGS were developed over two and half years by young people with support from senior leaders.

We call on religious, faith, spiritual and interfaith communities and organizations to adopt these IDGs and to implement them in their local, national and international work.

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<sup>2</sup> In this document, we encompass interreligious and intercultural in the term interfaith. We also include secular-religious and religious-humanist dialogue.

<sup>3</sup> As of 15 January 2018

## **Goal 1- Strong Interfaith Cooperation**

Promote cooperation among cultural groups and different religions on matters of common interest.

### *Strategies*

- 1.1 Promote and support platforms where different religions and faiths can address matters of common interest;
- 1.2 Foster cooperation between various societal groups affected by and concerned with interfaith harmony;
- 1.4 Nurture respect and dialogue in environments of diversity of belief and thought.

## **Goal 2 - Peace through Dialogue**

Promote interfaith and intercultural dialogue as a means towards conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

### *Strategies*

- 2.1 Engage religious, cultural and community leaders in the promotion of respect towards different religious or ethnic groups by direct outreach to community members;
- 2.2 Support interfaith activism and use positive traditional narratives as a reminder of a given group's values during turbulent times, in order to prevent the escalation of the conflict;
- 2.3 Establish safe space in order to facilitate conversations between various communities in an atmosphere of openness and mutual respect to help resolve conflicts.

## **Goal 3 – Universal Freedom and Protection of Religion**

Seek in any arena to uphold freedom and protection of thought and religious identity in every expression around the world.

### *Strategies*

- 3.1 Develop yet unarticulated strategies to end discrimination based on religious ground and closely correlated with other human rights issues, such as age, race, sex, language, national or social origin, sexual orientation, political opinion or other status;
- 3.2 Promote existing rules established by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to work against discrimination, taking into account the distinctions of each specific community and target group;
- 3.3 Increase awareness about discrimination at the grassroots level and foster a culture of zero tolerance for discrimination.

## **Goal 4 - Intergenerational Engagement**

Stimulate youth engagement in interfaith and intercultural activities towards fostering cross-cultural understanding.

### *Strategies*

- 4.1 Enable youth to build bridges with their own tools and innovations to foster dialogue and acknowledge the contribution of youth in existing programs to encourage them to work sustainably;
- 4.2 Enable access of young people to educational and social interfaith platforms;
- 4.3 Assemble and disseminate tools, frameworks, and guiding principles as a solid knowledge basis for intercultural competences for youth;
- 4.4 Arrange programs and events (e.g. fellowship and capacity building programs) to engage youth of diverse backgrounds, particularly in multicultural contexts, to analyze and implement responses on the pressing local and global issues;
- 4.5 Develop and engage in practices which will enhance the freedom of expression in interfaith work.

## **Goal 5 - Protection of Women's Dignity and Rights**

Engage religious and spiritual communities in protection and empowerment of girls and women against violence and abuse.

### *Strategies*

- 5.1 Empower people to addresses gender inequalities and violent mistreatment against girls and women in the name of religion;
- 5.2 Support the creation of initiatives and regional bodies that can work to protect the dignity and rights of religious and nonreligious girls and women;
- 5.3 Foster and encourage spaces where women can express their beliefs and needs, and safely exercise personal choices.

## **Goal 6 - Access to Interfaith Education and Religious Literacy**

Raise cultural and religious awareness and promote religious literacy in multiple forums to develop an understanding for the Other and work against prejudice and ignorance.

### *Strategies*

6.1 Strengthen the understanding of one's own religion, as well as others, within religious spaces and houses of worship;

6.2 Promote religious/cultural understanding and literacy in formal and informal educational contexts through field trips, student exchange programs, cultural events, seminars, dialogues, etc.

## **Goal 7 - Cooperation with Non-Religious Actors**

Promote collaboration with non-religious actors to foster greater understanding and mutual cooperation to tackle pressing issues of our time.

### *Strategies*

7.1 Work towards strong partnerships with national, international and civil society organizations to address religious and non-religious related issues;

7.2 Share platforms such that all stakeholders are included as serious actors when addressing common issues.

## **Goal 8 - Religion as a Tool for Peace**

Engage in the education and interpretation of religious, spiritual and faith communities as historic and inexhaustible foundations for the theory and practice of peace. Religion is neither used as a justification, nor scapegoated as a reason for war, violence and discrimination.

### *Strategies*

8.1 Continue to uphold the peacemaking potential of religions, faith and spiritual communities;

8.2 Seek to unmask the appropriation of religious, faith or spiritual communities and principles for political ends;

8.3 Strengthen the members of religious, faith and spiritual communities in their understanding that religion is an empowering tool to resist violence and provide assistance in making known those who already promote peacemaking and development through their doctrines and practices

## **Goal 9 - Recognition and Protection of Religious and Ethnic Minorities and Vulnerable Groups**

Encourage religious, faith or spiritual communities to recognize and protect national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, as well as vulnerable groups such as LGBTQ+ and differently abled persons.



*Strategies*

- 9.1 Engage religious leaders in the promotion of respect towards persons and communities belonging to minorities;
- 9.2 Promote awareness about the particular challenges and prejudices faced by minorities;
- 9.3 Encourage the participation of minorities in interfaith forums.

**Goal 10 - Respect for Religious, Faith and Spiritual Symbols and Places**

Ensure treatment of religious, faith and spiritual symbols with respect and sanctity. Collaborate between religions and faiths to protect spiritual and religious symbols, houses of faith and worship, and sanctuaries.

*Strategies*

- 10.1 Encourage the acknowledgement, respect and protection of the symbols of the entire human community;
- 10.2 Collaborate in the protection of each other's holy symbols, places and languages;
- 10.3 Strengthen the importance of their protection in non-religious forums and secular societies.
- 10.4 Promote respect for differences by providing young people with a safe space for dialogue and a counternarrative to hate speech