



# IMPACT REPORT

MARCH 2020 - APRIL 2021

*Prepared by Liliia Khasanova and Sara Rahim*

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## Contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| I. Overview   | 1  |
| II. Past Highlights (April 2019 – February 2020)  | 2  |
| III. Overview of activities implemented by ACWAY fellows (March 2020-April 2021)        | 3  |
| Community Action Grants   | 3  |
| 1. Youth to break down barriers in Cameroon by Clement Awanfe                           | 4  |
| 2. Our Faith, Our Humanity in Kenya by Zachariah Munayi                                 | 5  |
| 3. Interfaith Dialogue Through Empowerment Training in Zambia by Maria Daka             | 6  |
| 4. Breaking the Silence of GBV through peacebuilding in Madagascar by Tsiry Randrianelo | 7  |
| IV. ACWAY Network Engagement  | 8  |
| ACWAY FELLOW TALKS  | 8  |
| 1. Holding Community during uncertain times on April 5, 2020                            | 8  |
| 2. Fundraising: Art and Science on June 7, 2020   | 9  |
| 3. Embodying Passion: From Narrative to Action on August 16, 2020                       | 9  |
| 4. Fellows Spotlight: From Narratives to Action on October 15, 2020                     | 10 |
| Newsletter  | 10 |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition, June 2020  | 10 |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> edition, June 2020  | 11 |
| ACWAY Interfaith Calendar / Fellow Perspectives (July 2020 - November 2020)             | 13 |
| 1. EID – July 2020  | 13 |
| 2. Rosh Hashanah - September 2020   | 14 |
| 3. Diwali - November 2020   | 15 |
| ACWAY Participation in G20 Interfaith Forum (October 2020)                              | 16 |
| “ACWAY Turns 5” Campaign (December 2020)  | 17 |
| V. ACWAY Virtual Forum 5  | 22 |
| VI. What’s next?  | 31 |
| Contact information   | 32 |

## I. 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 Azerbaijan (2019). 2020 has been different as COVID-19 pandemic has fundamentally disrupted regular in-person meetings and activities while amplifying existing problems in the communities. The pandemic has also made us to adjust our plans for 2020-21 and transfer all the activities online while the world went into lockdown. In difficult times like these, community service and peer-to-peer support are of utmost importance. This report summarizes the impact from the 2020 online ACWAY Forum 5, activities performed by ACWAY fellows during the year and the UN World Interfaith Harmony Weeks, as well as internal ACWAY engagement activities and new inter-organizational collaborations.

### ACWAY FORUM 5: SOLIDARITY IN ACTION (ONLINE) HIGHLIGHTS

The fifth ACWAY Forum was held virtually on **February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021**, in under the common theme of Solidarity in Action. **Over 170** international young people from 74 countries and 30 religious/philosophical traditions registered for the Forum with more than 190 participating.

### ACTIVITIES HIGHLIGHTS

ACWAY fellows implemented 7 activities in 5 countries with more than 220 beneficiaries in local communities. Some of those activities were possible because of *ACWAY community activism grants* – the new initiative that was aimed at supporting fellows in delivering activities.

### INTERNAL ENGAGEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

“ACWAY Fellow Talks”, as a series of regular webinars for ACWAY fellows, were continued with the aim of promoting collaboration, resource sharing, skill-building and support in between ACWAY Forums. Between the period of March 2020 – April 2021, 4 webinars have been implemented on different topics. Three internal Newsletters have been released during that period, highlighting ACWAY fellows and their activities. A new initiative - “Interfaith Calendar” was introduced giving space to fellows to share their festive traditions. “ACWAY Turns 5” Campaign has highlighted reflections of 10 ACWAY fellows about their interfaith journey after ACWAY Forum experience in Morocco in 2015.

Despite COVID-19 pandemic, this year has been very fruitful, especially in terms of engaging and building the ACWAY network internally.

## II. Past Highlights (April 2019 – February 2020)

### ACWAY FORUM IN BAKU – JULY 2019

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.

### III. Overview of activities implemented by ACWAY fellows (March 2020-April 2021)

7

activities were implemented by fellows after the Baku Forum

5

countries involved

11

local partners involved

220

people engaged

### COMMUNITY ACTION GRANTS

The purpose of ACWAY Community Action Grants is to build upon the unique ACWAY Forum training by providing support to active ACWAY fellows in their ongoing work to promote interfaith action and peacebuilding in their local community. Through this grant, ACWAY aims to provide active fellows with the financial support they need to develop great ideas and deliver community based projects that encourage interfaith cooperation, community engagement, and other social action issues as highlighted in the ACWAY Forums. The ACWAY Community Action Grants provide funding for delivering local, voluntary interfaith projects and initiatives by ACWAY Fellows.

**ACWAY Community Activism Awards**  
selected projects

-  **Project: Interfaith Dialogue Through Empowerment Training**  
Fellow: Maria Daka  
Zambia
-  **Project: Breaking the silence of GBV through peacebuilding**  
Fellow: Tsiry Nantenaina  
Madagascar
-  **Project: Youth to break down barriers**  
Fellow: Clement Awante Ngueto  
Cameroon
-  **Project: Our Faith, our Humanity**  
Fellow: Zachariah Manayi  
Kenya

**ACWAY**

## 1. Youth to break down barriers in Cameroon by Clement Awanfe

### ACWAY Community Activism Awards

#### selected projects



#### Project: Youth to break down barriers

 Cameroon

The project will be composed by a youth peace education campaign in the city of Santchou, Cameroon. A four-day campaign will be organized, which will include youth dialogue groups around building relationships and promoting coexistence.

#### About the Fellow: Clement Awanfe Ngueto

Clement is the Founder of Global Compassion, a non-profit based in Cameroon. He has more than 8 years of experience working in the field of peacebuilding internationally in more than 8 countries, locally within his country and his community. Clément has served as an ACWAY fellow since 2015, grant advisor at The Pollination Project Foundation based in the US, and member of several international peacebuilding networks and has been trained by the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) and the University of Amsterdam. Clement has been supporting his community with safe water taps and computer labs that are accessible to teenagers, as well as organizing relief for those affected by disasters and ongoing conflict.

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## 2. Our Faith, Our Humanity in Kenya by Zachariah Munayi

### ACWAY Community Activism Awards

#### selected projects



#### Project: Our Faith, our Humanity



Kenya

The project will work towards addressing intergenerational gaps in the cities of Nairobi and Naivasha, in Kenya. A 3-day immersive experience for youth will be organized, including community service at a local orphanage, interfaith dialogue sessions, and round table discussions around interfaith action and the role of technology.

#### About the Fellow: Zachariah Munayi

Zachariah O. Munayi holds a Bachelor's degree in Gender and Development Studies from Egerton University and is currently pursuing a Masters of Art degree in Project Planning and Management at the University of Nairobi. He is the Former National Youth Programme Executive at the Kenya Scouts Association with over seven years' experience. He is also a Digital Skills Lead Trainer consultant at CODE-IP Trust Kenya. Founder and Executive Director at Destined for Greatness Organization, Chief Executive Officer at BELO Barbershop & Spa. As an ACWAY fellow from Kenya, he has continuously supported ACWAY activities since its inception in 2015.

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### 3. Interfaith Dialogue Through Empowerment Training in Zambia by Maria Daka

## ACWAY Community Activism Awards selected projects



### Project: Interfaith Dialogue Through Empowerment Training

 Zambia

A two-week interfaith dialogue and empowerment training will be implemented in Nakonde, Zambia. This project will work with young people aged 16-25 from Christian, Muslim, Hindu, and African traditions, and will also provide training in carpentry, tailoring, and welding to equip young people with pipelines for stability and economic advancement.

### About the Fellow: Maria Daka

Maria Daka is a 28 year old Zambian ACWAY fellow, presently working as an educationalist and is an advocate for girls' and women's empowerment issues. She is a member of iDove, an organization under the African Union (AU) that uses interfaith dialogue as a tool in prevention of violent extremism, and she currently serves as a Coordinator of an interfaith group under Launching Leaders Worldwide. Maria has been engaged in interfaith work since 2017 and has conducted various projects and workshops that use interfaith dialogue to promote peace and implement responses to local and global challenges. She is passionate about engaging diverse people to live in harmony.

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#### 4. Breaking the Silence of GBV through peacebuilding in Madagascar by Tsiry Randrianavelo

## ACWAY Community Activism Awards

### selected projects



#### Project: Breaking the silence of GBV through peacebuilding

 Madagascar

The project will focus on raising awareness about gender-based violence in Madagascar, highlighting how the role of culture and interfaith cooperation can promote impactful action. He will host a series of events, including a panel discussion around GBV in Madagascar and peacebuilding, a week-long peacemaking campaign, and a large-scale youth community service project, engaging 50 youth to paint a peace mural and plant trees at a local orphanage.

#### About the Fellow: Tsiry Randrianavelo

Tsiry Randrianavelo is a young leader and peacebuilder from Madagascar. He is a graduate of Master of Business Administration and is passionate about climate, gender, peace and social equity. As a community activist, he founded Move up Madagascar (NGO), which is focused on youth, environment, and social equity. Joining the ACWAY community in 2019, he amplified his fight against gender based violence by promoting multiculturalism within his home community. Tsiry believes that one must “be the person you are proud to be, and leave the best for humanity”. His vision is to grant to youth the well-being we deserve.

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## IV. ACWAY Network Engagement

### 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 was a 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 were started in February 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. To date, there were 5 successful editions, 4 of which took place between April – December 2020.

#### 1. 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) [@ACWAYProject](#) [@acwayofficial](#) [@ACW](#)



## 2. 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.



A fellow-designed and fellow-led initiative

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

**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

info@acway.org @ACWAYProject @acwayofficial @ACWAYProject

## 3. Embodying Passion: From Narrative to Action on August 16, 2020

This talk featured fellows Zack Munyani (Kenya), Lina Sakina Salim (Singapore), and Rawaad Mahyub (UK), who shared reflections on their personal journeys in interfaith dialogue, their sources of inspiration, the (re)shaping of their worldview, and their call to action.



A fellow-designed and fellow-led initiative

Sunday, 16 August 2020  
10:00 CST | 15:00 GMT | 22:00 WIB

**Embodying Passion**  
From Narratives to Action

**Zachariah Munyai**  
Kenya

**Lina Sakina Salim**  
Singapore

**Rawaad Mahyub**  
United Kingdom

Zoom Link  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87973261338>  
For More Information  
[uzair.ben.ebrahim@gmail.com](mailto:uzair.ben.ebrahim@gmail.com)

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Fellow Talks

info@acway.org @ACWAYProject @acwayofficial @ACWAYProject

## 4. Fellows Spotlight: From Narratives to Action on October 15, 2020

This was the final Fellow Talk of the year, where we invited three more outstanding ACWAY Interfaith leaders to share their story. Our guests Habiba Dahir (Kenya), Sukhmeet Sachal (Canada), and Melissa Trad (Argentina) shared reflections on their passions around gender and security, the intersection of medicine and faith, and journalism.

## NEWSLETTER

ACWAY Marketing issues a quarterly internal newsletter to its members, highlight ACWAY activities, meet-ups, and opportunities to stay engaged. The Newsletter is another fellow-led initiative that was initiated after the Baku Forum. As of June, two newsletters have been released, updating ACWAY activities implemented by interfaith news and community on selected ACWAY Fellows, latest opportunities.

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

### 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 interfaith 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 ways to talk and act, 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, run by volunteers from different backgrounds, races and religions. The project involves donating food items, writing, storage, packing and responding to requests, cooking food and delivering to people's homes - all under physical distancing guidelines. There are so many different stories, from old people living by themselves and just having someone check on them and make, albeit short, contact was clearly a wonderful moment, to young healthcare workers that struggle to find time because they are out there helping others above and beyond their duty. Clearly COVID-19 has brought to the surface what was hidden for years, difficult for others and uncomfortable for me. I have been grateful to play a small part in this community outreach service, an obligation on us as a right as those who receive. We are indeed only willing to do what the state should provide in the long term."



Allyson Zacharoff | Jewish, USA

"One of the most important principles in Islam is *shukr* (gratitude), which means you can break almost any religious rule to save a life. Fortunately, this means that many Jewish communities here in the US responded very quickly the need to shut down in-person events when the pandemic erupted in March. Surprisingly overnight, the Jewish world went online and all suddenly had access to Jewish worship services and learning opportunities from here and from around the world. Many congregations have actually seen even greater numbers of people attending events, as people seek connection during this time. However, for those Jewish communities that refrain from using technology on holidays, the challenges faced under operations are amplified by their inability to virtually connect to help days. But throughout, there has been a true effort to be creative throughout this unique moment in time."

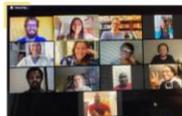


### ACWAY FELLOW TALKS

'ACWAY Fellow Talks' is a fellow-designed and fellow-led initiative that was launched in January 2020 with collective efforts from ACWAY fellows **Usair 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 last place in **#UNWIIW** 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 **Inshad Osman**, fundraiser 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)



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July 2020 | 2nd 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 9 voluntary interfaith activities under the common theme **#TakingTheLead**. Our fellows organized these events across 13 countries, initiating interfaith and intercultural activities related to a range of topics including:

UNWIIHW 2020 IN NUMBERS

November 2020 | 3rd Edition

# ACWAY

A Common Word Among the Youth

## INTERNAL NEWSLETTER

### G20 Interfaith Youth Forum

October 8th, 2020



(Source: KAICIID)

As a collaborative partner to the G20 Interfaith Forum (G20I), selected ACWAY fellows were invited to take part in both the G20 Interfaith Youth Forum and the main Interfaith Forum. The aim of the Youth Forum was to gather youth to collaborate and offer policy recommendations to the main G20I platform. The fellows brought their unique perspectives and insights to priority global issues during this one-day virtual event. It was also an opportunity to exchange best practices across regions and identify concrete policy recommendations to be presented during the G20I panel discussions. This year, the Forum was organized by the G20 Interfaith Forum Association, KAICIID and several other partners.

### 19 ACWAY fellows were nominated to take part at the Forum



**Carolina Yagas | Catholic, Argentina**

"I was participating in Working Group 2: Addressing the needs of refugees and migrants and advancing solutions, with a focus on women and youth. My personal recommendation for the topic was the effective enforcement of laws in order to prevent and punish violence against women. The commitments made under International Law need to be given life and force on the ground through national laws alongside programs working to bring about changes in norms about violence."

**Lina Salim | Muslim, Singapore**

"I am happy to see that the scope of G20I this year went beyond the typical interreligious issues of security and peacebuilding, and addressed equally pertinent global challenges of political ecology, modern slavery and the COVID-19 impact upon communities across the globe. For the YCF20, my group discussed how religious communities could contribute to combat climate change from within the communities, by linking religious teachings to preservation of the environment and to have adequate training for religious leaders on the climate and ecological awareness."

### ACWAY participation in G20 Interfaith Forum

October 13-16, 2020

On October 14, ACWAY fellow and Head of Programs, Sara Rahim, participated in the Panel Discussion titled "Supporting vulnerable groups in times of COVID-19". During this session, Sara highlighted the key issues facing youth - including access to education, growing unemployment, the need for mental health support, and access to decision making processes. These recommendations also serve as the basis for a policy brief led by Sara Rahim and Dr. Brian Adams on behalf of the G20 Youth & Children working group. The brief has been drafted with collaborative effort with the support of the following ACWAY fellows: Skyler Oberst, Lilia Khazanova, Sibiya Sou, Sineha Roy and Siby Szymonowska.

The brief offers recommendations based on ACWAY's Interfaith Development Goals and called upon development of policies that protect, integrate and develop young people emphasizing that youth participation in local faith communities and civil society movements can yield more sustainable and intergenerational impact.



## ACWAY Impact Report 2020

## 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**. This program has focused on promoting collaboration, resource sharing, and virtual community amongst ACWAY Fellows in between in-person gatherings.



(ACWAY Fellows in AFT#5)

Over the past year, ACWAY released five virtual Fellow Talks from January to October. Since the last edition of our Newsletter, we ran the last two Fellow Talks. Learn more below!

### AFT #4 - 16 Aug 2020

#### Embodying Passion: From Narratives to Action

Our fourth AFT featured our fellows Zack Muryani (Kenya), Lina Sakina Salim (Singapore) and Rawaad Mahyub (UK), who shared reflections on their personal journeys in interfaith dialogue, their sources of inspiration, the re-shaping of their worldview, and their call to take action.



### AFT #5 - 15 Oct 2020

#### Fellows Spotlight: From Narratives to Action

This was the final Fellow Talk of the year, where we invited three more outstanding ACWAY interfaith leaders. Our guests, Habiba Dahir (Kenya), Sukhmeet Sachal (Canada), and Melissa Trad (Argentina) shared reflections on their passions, the experiences that shaped their worldview, and their call to action.



## New ACWAY activity delivered!

10-Oct-2020 | Nairobi, Kenya

### "EMBRACING OUR CULTURAL DIVERSITY THROUGH ENDURANCE - MT. LONGONOT HIKING"



On October 10th, our fellow **Zachariah Munayi** brought together participants from different walks of life and communities with different cultural and religious backgrounds to bond, connect network and above all relate to the realities of the situation caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. The activity counted with members from four different religions, comprising Christians, Muslims, practitioners of the African Traditional Religion (part of the Maasai community) and Hindus.



The area of the hike, being a native homeland for the Maasai Community, gave the participants a great opportunity to reflect on some of their cultural practices and as well on those practiced by the Maasai. This gave them an insight on how each community is unique in the sense that they all believe in something or hold on to a higher being, finding a common ground with the human rights in people-centred approach (which affirms the dignity of each and every person).



Note: Due to COVID-19 safety regulations, all hikers had to be tested beforehand including their vitals being taken, masks were provided. Given that the hike involved a lot of physical activity and high altitudes and considering the need for free flowing air, most participants were allowed to climb up without their masks on. We took care of all other necessary COVID-19 requirements.

## Our Fellows around the globe

**Women in Religious Leadership and Interfaith Dialogue: The Challenges Faced and Possible Solutions**

Allison Zacharoff

This article explores the challenges that women face in their role as religious leaders and interfaith dialogue. It discusses the importance of women's leadership in religious communities and the need for greater support and resources. The author offers practical suggestions for how religious communities can better support women in their leadership roles.

**Allison Zacharoff | Jewish, USA**



Allison Zacharoff, USA has published her new academic article on "Women in Religious Leadership and Interfaith Dialogue: The Challenges Faced and Possible Solutions". This article emphasizes that women have a great deal to contribute to the field of interfaith relations but can face critical challenges in what has long been a male clergy-dominated field. If you are interested, please feel free to check it out here: <https://ir.studies.org/index.php/jirs/article/view/493/509>

## The New ACWAY Website in LIVE!



You can now see what other ACWAY fellows around the world have been working on and get inspiration for your projects or collaboration.

Visit our new website at: <https://acway.org/>

The section on grassroots activities is currently in the process of filling up and showcasing all the activities. Moreover, the reporting link is now constantly available on the website in the section of grassroots activities.



## WHAT IS NEXT?

What can you expect from ACWAY in the next few months?

### ACWAY Turns 5 This December

As ACWAY celebrates its five-year birthday next month in December, we're excited to share another opportunity to highlight the incredible work of our fellows. Keep an eye out for ACWAY Community Action Awards! We welcome you to begin thinking about the best ways to engage your community.

### UN World Interfaith Harmony Week

As we look to 2021, we're excited for another UN World Interfaith Harmony Week, which is celebrated throughout the month of February. Each month, we encourage our fellows to deliver at least one activity that falls within our selected theme. We will be using WhatsApp to collaborate on the ACWAY theme, and in the meanwhile, feel free to send us your suggestions (past themes - 2016: Local Action, 2017: Diversity, 2018: We Are One and 2020: Taking the Lead)

### ACWAY Forum 2021

Although our 2020 Forum has been postponed due to COVID-19, we are eagerly planning for our next gathering to take place in 2021. This annual gathering will take place either in person (if it is safe to meet) or virtually. More information soon! If you would like to assist with planning, please contact [sara@acway.org](mailto:sara@acway.org).

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)



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<http://acway.org/>

## ACWAY INTERFAITH CALENDAR / FELLOW PERSPECTIVES (JULY 2020 - NOVEMBER 2020)

### 1. EID – July 2020



ACWAY wishes all Muslims and their loved ones who observe Eid Al-Adha a very meaningful celebration! This year, Eid falls on July 30-31.

Here's one perspective on Eid from ACWAY Fellow Lina Sakina Salim (Muslim, Malaysia):

"In my region of Southeast Asia, Eid Al-Adha is considered the minor Eid between the two Eids that we have (the other is the Eidul Fitr), which is contrary to what is celebrated in other Muslim majority countries. Nevertheless, it is a merry celebration, and families get together and enjoy the day by feasting on the festive food and visiting extended families around us. Eid Al-Adha is known as the Feast of Sacrifice, and I am reminded of the sacrifices of our prophets and predecessors in spreading the message of God to humanity. This year, for the first time, I am officially participating in the Qurban, or the ritual slaughter of a sheep that I have purchased in a village in Indonesia. By doing my Qurban overseas, I am donating all of the meat to the needy there. May Allah accept my deeds and my sacrifice this year.

Included here is a photograph of me celebrating Eid Al-Adha with my family in Singapore two years ago, which reminds me that this year I will not be able to be with my parents due to COVID-19 travel restrictions and a photo of our family gathering to send off my mother-in-law, who was fortunate to go and perform her (hajj) pilgrimage to Mecca last year at this time."

## 2. Rosh Hashanah - September 2020



***This holiday is really about the internal, individual spiritual process of cleansing and renewal***

"The joy of Rosh HaShana, the Jewish new year, combines perfectly with the physical and spiritual cleansing effect of fasting for our day of atonement, Yom Kippur, when we seek to make amends and so be inscribed in the Book of Life for the coming year. That is why I look forward to the High Holidays every year!"

**Anja Fahlenkamp,**  
**Jewish**  
ACWAY Fellow  
Berlin, Germany



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ACWAY would like to wish all Jewish people and their loved ones who observe the High Holidays a very meaningful celebration! This year, Rosh Hashanah takes place from September 18-20 and Yom Kippur on September 27-28.

Here's one perspective on the holidays from ACWAY Fellow Anja Fahlenkamp (Jewish, Germany):

"The Jewish High Holidays are hugely important to me. They are a time of renewal, of looking back at the year and self-assessing the challenges and difficulties I have faced and how I have (or haven't) dealt with them, of making amends, asking for forgiveness and resolving quarrels--with the world, with others, and with myself--and of starting fresh. To celebrate Rosh HaShana and to observe Yom Kippur, we go to the community prayer at the synagogue and maybe share a humble family meal after, but my family doesn't really celebrate the Jewish new year with big, family-centred celebrations like we would for Chanukkah or Passover. Instead, this holiday is really about the internal, individual spiritual process of cleansing and renewal. The joy of Rosh HaShana, the Jewish new year, combines perfectly with the physical and spiritual cleansing effect of fasting for our day of atonement, Yom Kippur, when we seek to make amends and so be inscribed in the Book of Life for the coming year. That is why I look forward to the High Holidays every year!" Below, you can see a picture of me visiting Jerusalem, the most sacred city for Jews, during the time of the High Holidays in 2009."

### 3. Diwali - November 2020



*To me, this day comes as a festival of lights that helps us disperse the most profound darkness around us.*

"To me, **Diwali** brings us a sense of togetherness, an appreciation of life; we follow the ancient rituals with spirituality in mind and a wish to have our hearts cleansed by the purity of the day. This is the perfect occasion to celebrate good over darkness and knowledge over ignorance, and sharing in the celebration with family and friends makes it even more meaningful."

**Anupoma Niloya Troyee**

ACWAY Fellow from Dhaka, Bangladesh



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ACWAY would like to wish all those who celebrate Diwali a very meaningful holiday! Diwali is celebrated by people around the world, including many who identify as Hindu, Jain, Buddhist, and Sikh. It takes place this year on November 14.

Here is one perspective on Diwali by ACWAY Fellow Anupoma Niloya Troyee (Bangladesh):

Diwali is celebrated in many names and in colors all around our Indian subcontinent. Different regions have taken different meanings from this festival. In the Bengal region where I am from, we call it Deepabali. At the end of our monsoon season, it comes with an abundance of light and flavors.

To me, this day comes as a festival of lights that helps us disperse the most profound darkness around us. We light candles, earthenware lamps in our whole households with a hope to illuminate our souls, to get rid of the darkness around us. We celebrate with a festive feast and spend the day with our families and friends. We wear new dresses and offer our prayers to the eternal power, and we clean and paint our homes to radiate the brightness around us. To me, this celebration brings us a sense of togetherness, an appreciation of life; we follow the ancient rituals with spirituality in mind and a wish to have our hearts cleansed by the purity of the day. This is the perfect occasion to celebrate good over darkness and knowledge over ignorance, and sharing in the celebration with family and friends makes it even more meaningful.

## ACWAY PARTICIPATION IN G20 INTERFAITH FORUM (OCTOBER 2020)



ACWAY fellows have been invited to take part in the G20i Youth Forum and the Interfaith Forum, which aim to gather the youth to contribute with recommendations to the G20 platform.

The fellows are expected to bring their unique perspectives and insights to the prioritized global issues as well as use this opportunity to exchange best practices across regions and identify potential concrete policy recommendations to be presented during the G20i panel discussions.

The 16 ACWAY fellows will have the opportunity to contribute to the following working groups:

Working Group 1: Countering hate speech and the use of social media as a space for dialogue;

Working Group 2: Addressing needs of refugees and migrants and advancing solutions, with a focus on women and youth;

Working Group 3: Ecological challenges: rainforest protection and purposeful action to protect the environment.

## “ACWAY TURNS 5” CAMPAIGN (DECEMBER 2020)




**Anna Krzeszowska Hovanecz**  
*ACWAY Trainer and Fellow from Poland  
 Founder of the Training and Development Center of Anna Krzeszowska - Hovanecz*

"As for me, ACWAY changed my life, broaden my perspectives and improved my work. It was the best life experience to me."

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**Bobby Ray Atmósfera**  
*ACWAY Fellow from Philippines  
 Teacher of Social Studies at the Philippine Science High School*

"The 2015 ACWAY Forum in Morocco has inspired me to be more inclusive and tolerant in spite of our diversity. The core values of ACWAY have helped me to instill in me and my students how to create a thriving community by promoting collaboration, action and service. These are the same values that we need today in these challenging times."

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**Ashleigh Werner**  
*ACWAY Fellow from Australia*

The ACWAY 2015 Forum was a defining moment in my life. It completely reshaped my world, my passion, my understanding and my views on everything and everyone in the world. I met people I never expected to be able to meet, shared views I had never shared and became friends with people I had been told I shouldn't be friends with. It was incredibly eye opening. I wish I could have continued my ACWAY journey the way it began, however my sporting career took off and I have been travelling the world as part of the Australian Bobsleigh Team since. ACWAY continues to hold a very very special place in my heart and I still converse with friends from that forum today! I miss it every single year and cannot wait to, hopefully in the future, rejoin my fellow ACWAYers!

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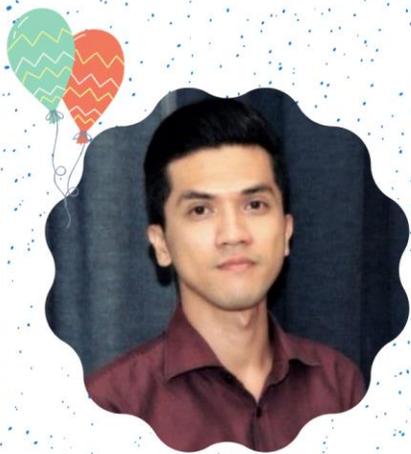
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**5 YEARS!**



**Ernad Deni Comaga**  
*ACWAY Fellow from  
Germany*

I will never forget the feeling when the first ACWAY seminar ended. WE ALL BECAME ONE! Despite religious differences, we understand each other and became close friends, sometime fiends for a lifetime! The ACWAY experience changed my own perspective on life and showed me that interreligious dialogue is a strong asset for a peaceful future! This one-time experience made me an unofficial lifetime ambassador of interreligious- and intercultural dialogue and gave me hope, that people like ACWAYers will change the world one day! Let's stay ONE!

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5 YEARS!

**Rodge Lelis**

**ACWAY Fellow from  
the Philippines**

As a volunteer who also leads other volunteers, ACWAY, since three years ago, has been inspiring me to invest more in healthy, life-changing and skill-building experience for our volunteers. ACWAY powerfully exhibits what volunteerism can do by showcasing young people from all walks of life making immense impact to individuals, families and communities across the world especially in the areas of interfaith and intercultural dialogue. Investing on volunteer development should be a duty and priority.



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**Laiqa Dilip Daewani,**

**ACWAY Fellow from  
Pakistan**

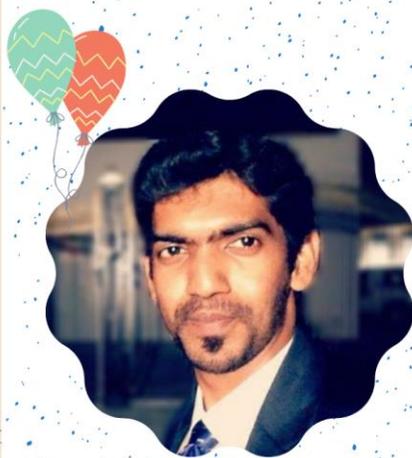
Ever since I attended the first ACWAY forum in Morocco, I have been more inclined towards understanding the diversity of faith and beliefs among my fellow community members. It has inspired me to do interfaith work to build an inclusive, tolerant and peaceful society where everyone is understood and respected.



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5 YEARS!

**Balaji Murugan**

*ACWAY Fellow from India*

*Activity Coordinator at The Cambridge School in Qatar*

ACWAY changed my entire lifestyle and makes me feel as a part of a peace network. ACWAY forum in Morocco was an unforgettable experience in my life.

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5 YEARS!

**Jabari Smith**

*ACWAY Fellow from USA*

*Program Manager at WorldChicago*

ACWAY represents FAMILY! I am honored to be a part of a network that is immensely rich in diversity across cultures, religions, nationalities, ethnicities, and orientations. I am a more intelligent person because of the exposure and relationships that ACWAY has granted me. Since the inaugural ACWAY Forum a lot has transpired in my journey. I have hosted my own Jabari Inspires travel TV series in Kenya, worked with Snapchat in Los Angeles, and facilitated experiential leadership and service learning trips for youth across the U.S. with Pathways in Education. I am currently a Program Manager with WorldChicago, a diplomacy organization where I lead the implementation and design of U.S. State Department Professional Fellowship Programs that bring global leaders and entrepreneurs to Chicago. I am EXTREMELY GRATEFUL of my journey of global citizenship and have no doubts that the BEST is yet to come!

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**ACWAY**  
A Common Word Among the Youth  
**5 YEARS!**

**Manal Zaid**  
*ACWAY Fellow from Lebanon*

With ACWAY, I had a beautiful experience and met with people from the whole world. I was back home taking with memories of a rich experience and feeling part of a new ACWAY makes me feel connected to openness and diversity we need in order to work together for a better world anniversary to ACWAY from Lebanon.

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**ACWAY**  
A Common Word Among the Youth  
**5 YEARS!**

**Jyuri Michino**  
*ACWAY Fellow from Japan*

Ever since ACWAY 2015, I have continued my work for peace through my academics. I pursued a dual masters in International Peace Studies and International Politics and through this program, I had the wonderful opportunity to collaborate and conduct an interfaith youth training and conference with my fellow ACWAY friend, Mandalar and a local NGO and university in Myanmar last year. ACWAY has taught me not only the possibility and beauty of interfaith but also the practicality and efficiency of cross-religious cooperation for peace.

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## V. ACWAY Virtual Forum 5

### 1. Overview

On February 25<sup>th</sup> 2021, and as part of the UN World Interfaith Harmony Week, [A Common Word Among the Youth \(ACWAY\)](#) organized the 5<sup>th</sup> ACWAY Forum (with this being our first virtual forum), under the theme of **#SolidarityinAction**.

ACWAY is pleased to have participated in the UN WIHW since 2016, delivering local activities around the world under one common theme. Our aim is to promote global collaboration through local action for a more peaceful and harmonious society between people of different faiths.

By organizing this Forum, we wanted to continue creating opportunities where we can come together in solidarity. We firmly believe that it's at times like these that we must rally together to give and to share, and to support and reflect, both in spirit and in action. A pandemic might stop us from coming together physically, but it should not prevent us from building community socially, spiritually and virtually.

**The aim** of the Virtual Forum was to provide a platform for young people to share ideas, experiences and opportunities to engage in promoting peace, understanding and solidarity among different communities.

### 2. Highlights and added value

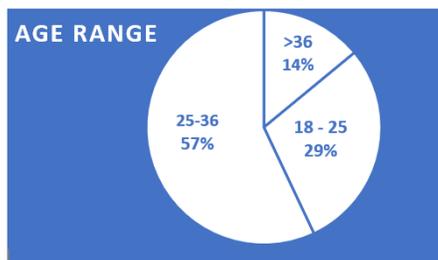
- One of the biggest online events for young people to inspire and talk about action in promoting interfaith harmony. Over 86% of the attendees were young people aged between 18 -35, engaging in intergenerational dialogue and facilitated trainings.
- ACWAY is an organization that is led and driven by a team of young volunteers who invested their time to organize the interfaith forum for their peers.
- According to testimonials, this Forum was “the best organized online event in the past few months”. Out of 170 people that joined, over 150 stayed for the full 2.5 hours.
- The Forum did not just promote solidarity between representatives of faith/philosophical traditions, but it also brought together in cooperation several interreligious organizations that collaborated in organizing the breakout sessions.
- Key takeaway from the Forum (based on testimonials): “Solidarity is Responsibility”. It is in difficult times like this we should stand up in solidarity and do what we can in our respective communities to promote peace and mutual understanding.

### 3. Forum in Numbers

450 people registered for the event/170 attended

74 countries represented

30 religions/philosophical traditions



## 4. Outputs

- During the Forum, more than 170 young people engaged in one of the three breakout sessions: POLICY, ACTION and LOCAL CONTEXT. At the end of the Forum, participants came together again to report on key recommendations and next steps (see Appendix 1: Forum Program).
- In the ACTION breakout session young people discussed tools and techniques to build and sustain interfaith engagement in their communities and especially during UNWIHW.
- Shared the Interfaith Development Goals and how delegates and organisations can contribute towards a more collaborative effort in capturing the great work that happens in the interfaith sector.
- Young people connected with each other and as a result, some collaborations have been formed for future partnerships and events based on the region or theme.
- Several young people, including ACWAY fellows, presented their interfaith activities that were conducted during the UN WIHW in Zambia, Madagascar, Cameroon and Kenya.
- Young people were able to share key issues in their communities and put forward policy recommendations to be presented to the G20 Interfaith Forum in Italy later this year.
- Partners of the Forum: *The Stirling Foundation, We the World, The G20 Interfaith Forum, GenLab (Bangladesh), United Religions Initiative and the Parliament of the World's Religions*

## 5. Testimonials

“I think it was inspiring to see just how many other young people are interested in interfaith and intercultural work **and are implementing projects in their communities**. My main take home message from the Forum was therefore the power of young people working together. We need to continue to create space for these connections to be made”.

“My main take home message was to **get conscious about the damage of fake news**, which can affect even on intercultural or interreligious levels. Also, the idea that solidarity and responsibilities are inseparable”.

“The Forum actually impacted me with knowledge on how to respond to the challenges in my community and also gave me the motivation to keep promoting the United Nations Sustainable development goals by connecting me to local and international opportunities all over the world for networking. **The Forum enables me to grow mentally, spiritually and inspired me to act in my community**”.

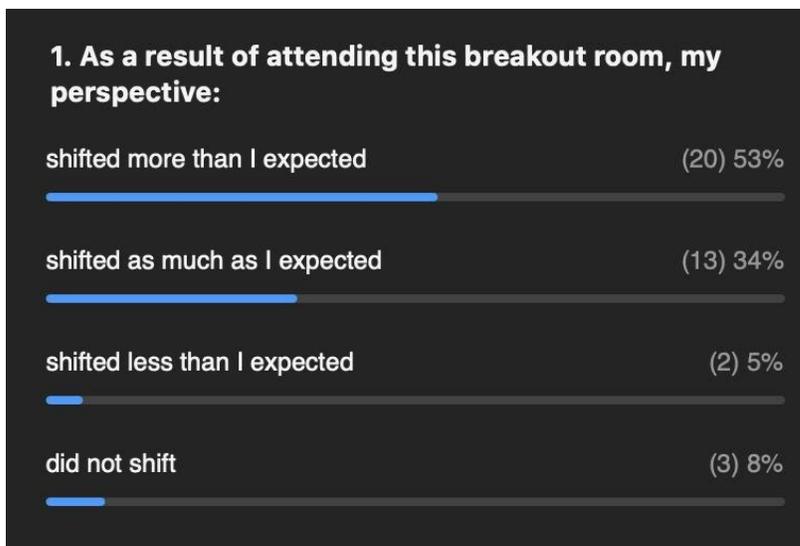
“So wonderful to see so many of you! It was a great reminder of the strength that comes from joining together, even virtually. **I came away re-invigorated to keep working on interfaith projects**, and to reconnect with you all”.

**“This was the most energizing online event I’ve ever attended”.**

## 6. Evaluation

Out of 86 people who participated in the evaluation:

- 82 people (94%) found this Forum useful/beneficial.
- 76 people (88%) stated that they felt they had the opportunity to share their ideas, questions, or comments in a safe space.
- 78 people (91%) stated that The Forum met their expectations.
- Results of the G20: Policy Breakout Room evaluation *“As a result of attending this breakout room, my perspective...”*:

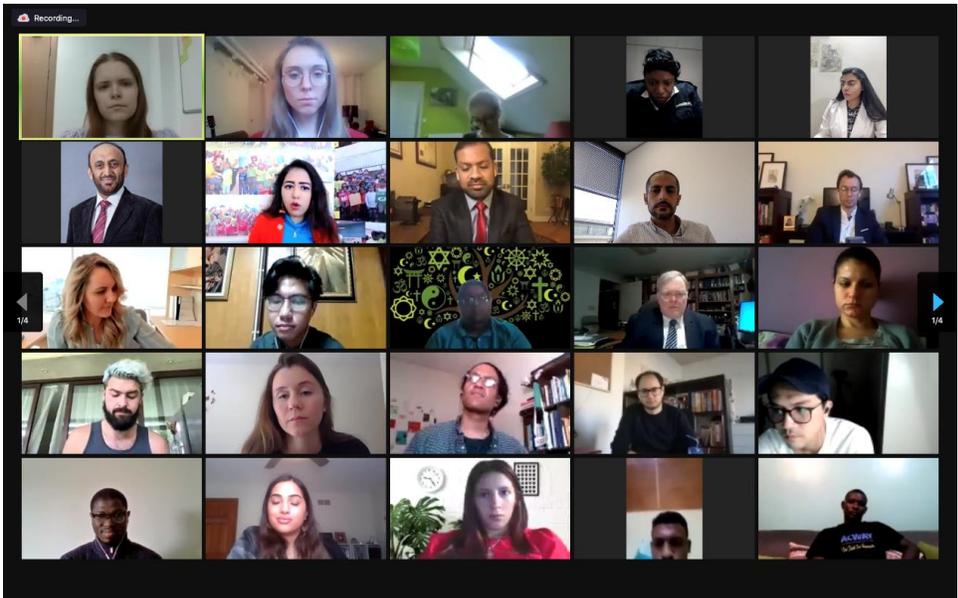
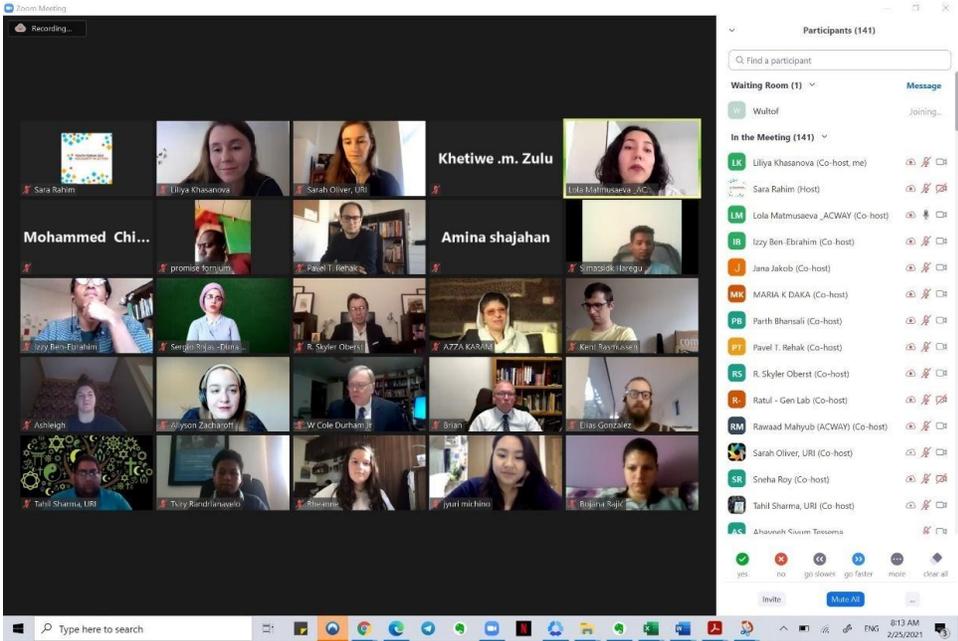


## 7. Media and Forum Coverage

Social media posts about this Forum in conjunction with the UN World Interfaith Harmony Week have reached more than 26000 people, engaging more than 1000 online.

Video teaser was made by young people on “What Does Solidary Mean to You and Your Community?”. Watch [here](#).

Forum was highlighted on the websites, newsletter, blogs of interfaith organizations (URI, KAICIID) and Youth Organization

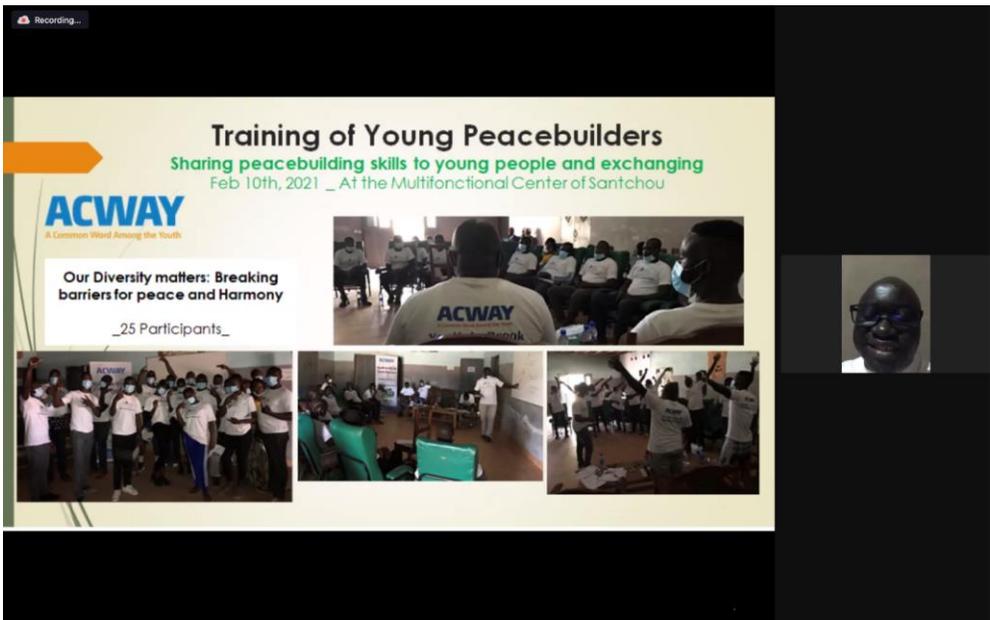




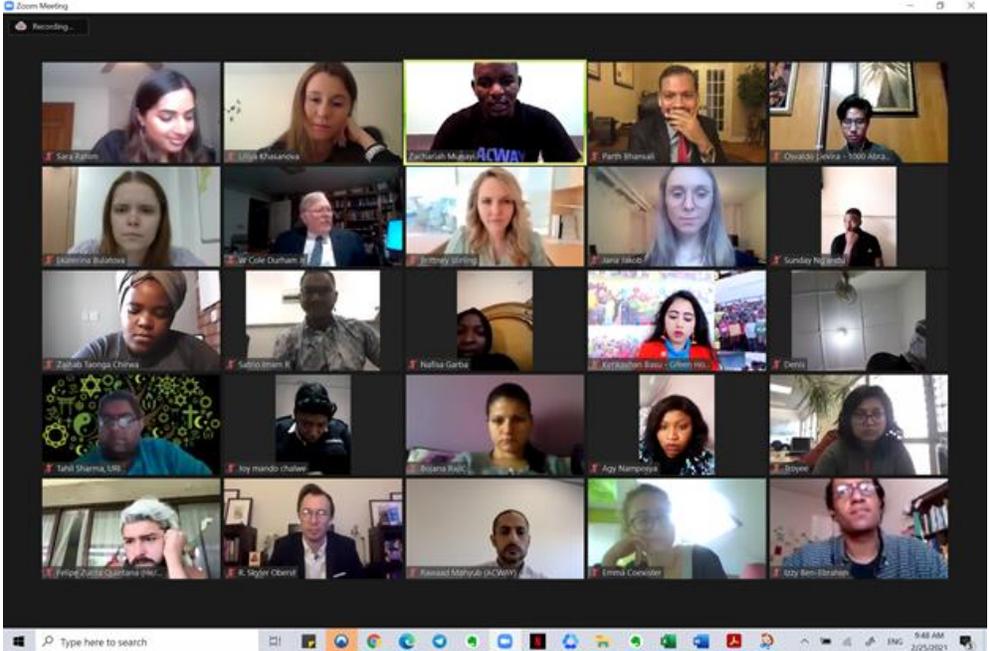
*Prof. Azza Karam from Religions for Peace*



*Prof. Cole Durham, G20 Interfaith Forum*



An interfaith activity presented by ACWAY Fellow Clement Awanfe from Cameroon



An interfaith activity presented by ACWAY fellow Zachariah Munayi from Kenya

## 8. Forum Program

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| <b>13.00 – 13.25</b><br><b>Opening session</b>   |  |
| <p><b>Izzy Ben-Ebrahim</b>   South Africa   Spiritual Activist &amp; Educator, ACWAY Fellow<br/> <b>Sara Rahim</b>   USA   Head of Programming, ACWAY</p> <p><b>Prof. W. Cole Durham, Jr.</b><br/> <i>G20 Interfaith Forum</i><br/> <i>W. Cole Durham, Jr., is the immediate past President of the <u>International Consortium for Law and Religion Studies (ICLARS)</u>, and Susa Young Gates University Professor of Law and Founding Director of the <u>International Center for Law and Religion Studies (ICLRS)</u>, at the J. Reuben Clark Law School of Brigham Young University.</i></p> <p><b>Prof. Azza Karam</b><br/> <i>Religions for Peace</i><br/> <i>Prof. Dr. Azza Karam serves as the Secretary General of Religions for Peace – the largest multi-religious leadership platform with 92 national and 6 regional Interreligious Councils. She served as a Senior Advisor on Culture, at the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA); and as Coordinator/Chair of the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Religion and Development (UN IATF-R&amp;D); and founder of the Multi Faith Advisory Council of the UN IATF-R&amp;D.</i></p> |  |
| <p>13:25 – 13:35</p> <p>Local project presentations by ACWAY fellows (Grantees):<br/> <b>Clement Awanfe Ngueto</b>   Cameroon   Peace building Consultant<br/> <b>Tsiry Randrianelo</b>   Madagascar   Founder at <u>Move Up Madagascar</u></p>  |  |
| <b>13.35 – 14.45</b><br><b>Break Out Sessions</b>  |  |
| <p>Group 1: Policy Recommendations for G20IF Italy</p>   | <p><u>Description:</u></p> <p>The G20 is a forum that brings together the political and economic leadership of the twenty largest economies of the world to address global challenges and coordinate responses to them. In 2020, the forum was hosted virtually with the theme “Realizing Opportunities of the 21st Century for All.” This year’s theme is focused on “Time to Heal: Peace Among Cultures, Understanding between Religions.”</p> <p>The G20 Interfaith Forum (IF20) is a consultative process that seeks to weave interfaith insight and faith perspectives into practical policy recommendations to the G20. ACWAY has been a global youth partner of the G20 Interfaith Forums</p> |

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|  | <p>since 2016. Every year, ACWAY is focused on building concrete policy recommendations informed by challenges that young people (children, youth, and adults under the age of 40) are facing around the world.</p> <p>This breakout room will specifically focus on building discussion around specific challenges facing young people, and practical recommendations to address them. The takeaways from this specific room will then be integrated into a policy brief to be submitted to the next G20 Interfaith Forum, on behalf of the Children &amp; Youth Working Group.</p> <p><i>Facilitators:</i></p> <p><b>Jana Jakob</b>   Sweden   Project Coordinator<br/> <b>Sara Rahim</b>   USA   Head of Programming, ACWAY</p> <p><i>In Discussion with:</i></p> <p><b>Elizabeta Kitanovic</b>   Belgium   G20 Interfaith Forum, Secretary<br/> <b>Skyler Oberst</b>   USA   Faith &amp; Tech Specialist<br/> <b>Parth Bhansali</b>   USA   Head of Travel at Groupon</p>   |
| <p>Group 2: Action planning with URI</p> | <p><i>Description:</i></p> <p>From ideation to evaluation, let's talk action! This breakout room seeks to take an action-based approach to discuss how young people can develop and implement their ideas into successful interfaith projects, including context-specific strategies, challenges, and lessons learned.</p> <p>We come from different contexts and backgrounds, where our work as interfaith and social justice activists has different political and social implications. Recognising this, what are the strategies and praxes that are useful to be shared with each other? How do we move between the local and global in our responses to social injustice?</p> <p>As young people we are expertly positioned to be navigating the current challenges of our world. We know our communities best, and therefore have the skills to be imagining and co-creating our desired futures. In this breakout session, we hope to create a space of inspiration, skills-sharing and learning. Join us! The breakout room will be run in collaboration with our partners and friends at URI – United Religions Initiative.</p> <p><i>Facilitators:</i></p> <p><b>Lola Matmusaeva</b>   Sweden   International Development Professional<br/> <b>Izzy Ben-Ebrahim</b>   South Africa   Spiritual Activist &amp; Educator</p> <p><i>in Discussion with:</i></p> <p><b>Tahil Sharma</b>   USA   United Religions Initiative<br/> <b>Sarah Oliver</b>   South Africa   United Religions Initiative</p> |

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| <p>Group 3: Local context with GenLab</p>  | <p><u>Description:</u></p> <p>Context matters. We hear that a lot and rightly so. The interfaith sector is diverse with many challenges and opportunities that differ from country to country and even within the country as well as within the same religion/faith/culture. The complexity of diversity is a strength in our community but how does it affect interfaith dialogue? What can we learn from each other at the local level about what works and what doesn't? Can we share examples of locally-led initiatives? This interactive session will explore the ACWAY IDGs, and how we can contribute to these at a local level with account for local context. The session will be led by our local partner GenLab based in Bangladesh.</p> <p><u>Facilitators:</u></p> <p><b>Ratul Dev</b>   Bangladesh   Executive Director, GenLab<br/> <b>Sneha Roy</b>   India/UK   Researcher, ACWAY Fellow</p> |
| <p><b>14:45 - 15:30</b><br/> <b>Closing Ceremony</b></p>   |  |
| <p>14:45 – 14:50<br/> Activities delivered during UN WIHW:<br/> <b>Zachariah Munayi</b>  Kenya  Gender &amp; Youth Programme Specialist<br/> <b>Maria K Daka</b>  Zambia  Social Justice Activist</p>  |  |
| <p>14.50 – 15.30<br/> Closing remarks &amp; Announcements<br/> <b>Brittney Stirling</b> USA Program Manager, Stirling Foundation<br/> <b>Kehkashan Basu</b>   Canada   Founder, Green Hope Foundation</p> <p>Announcements:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How to contribute to the G20IF Youth Policy Brief and present at the Forum</li> <li>2. Capturing impact of interfaith action using ACWAYs Interfaith Development Goals (IDGs)</li> <li>3. Opportunities to apply for the next round of ACWAY’s Activism Award grant to deliver activities during UN WIHW 2022</li> </ol> |  |



## VI. What's next?

In preparation for the G20 Interfaith Forum (G20IF) in September of 2021 to be held in Bologna, ACWAY will be organizing the G20 Youth Interfaith Forum to bring together 50 young people from around the world.

In its role as G20IF Global Youth Partner and Chair of the Youth Working Group, ACWAY will also be supporting the role of young people at the G20IF to facilitate youth engagement and representation.



## Contact information

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