

A COMMON WORD AMONG THE YOUTH (ACWAY)

JANUARY 2024

2023 ANNUAL REPORT



PREPARED BY

LILIYA KHASANOVA/
HEAD OF OPERATIONS

ACWAY
A Common Word Among the Youth



OVERVIEW

A Common Word Among the Youth (ACWAY) is a global youth movement that brings together young people from a multitude of backgrounds to increase understanding of different cultures and faiths, promote peace and coexistence, develop skills to help local communities and deliver shared solutions in the form of local action.

This year has been marked by meaningful connections, enriching experiences, and the tireless pursuit of our shared vision for a harmonious world.

2024 started with the seventh edition of **Global Youth Interfaith and Intercultural Forum** held in February in collaboration with Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue (DICID) in Doha, Qatar.

This year **50 new fellows** and **32 new members** have joined the network; **6 fellow-led volunteer activities** were delivered; **2 online engagements** were held.

Our existing partnerships across the sector have been strengthened and new meaningful partnerships established.

GLOBAL YOUTH INTERFAITH & INTERCULTURAL FORUM

11- 14 FEBRUARY 2023
DOHA, QATAR



The forum under the theme **“Youth Peacebuilding: Interfaith Dialogue from Theory to Practice”** amplified a global message of peaceful coexistence in the spirit of the United Nations World Interfaith Harmony Week in February 2023.



PARTICIPANTS



After a competitive application process, we received **over 1100 (!) applications** to attend the Doha Forum.

Fifty young people, including existing and newly selected ACWAY fellows, were selected to represent their communities in Doha. Twenty-one young people were local participants from Qatar.

71 YOUTH PARTICIPANTS
35 COUNTRIES
8 FAITH AND SECULAR TRADITIONS

43 FEMALES/28 MALES
23 AGED 18-24/ 25 AGED 25-29/22 AGED 30-35

8 EXISTING ACWAY MEMBERS
7 MEMBERS OF THE ACWAY PLANNING TEAM

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS



The program revolved around the following 3 key topics:

1. Peace through Interfaith understanding and intercultural communication
2. Contemporary Issues and Challenges: Faith and Culture, Civility and Religion
3. Youth Action, Collaboration and Global Citizenry

Number of Sessions: 11 interactive and engaging sessions.

Number of Workshops: 4 parallel world cafe-style workshops.

Sub-topics discussed:

- Contemporary Issues and Challenges: Faith and Culture.
- Religious Pluralism in the Middle East: Challenges and Prospects.
- Conflict Resolution Scenarios: Negotiating in Active and Passive Dialogue
- Supporting a Unified Approach to Faith-based Peacebuilding:
- Grassroot Action and Grasstop advocacy: Unpacking core challenges Faced by Youth of Faith
- Project Planning for local interfaith activities
- Breaking Bad Stereotypes: Dialoging for a contemporary context and navigating biases
- Dialogue for a Contemporary Context Global Citizenship, Climate Change and Faith: A Lego Serious Play Exploration
- Peace, Policy and Practice: The Role of Religion and Religious actors.
- Policy formulation in interfaith work
- From Diversity to Pluralism: Islam's Approach to Getting to Know the Other.

OUTPUTS

- A growing active network of young people engaged in the interfaith sector
- A series of planned activities which the young people will deliver back in their home countries
- Adoption of the Interfaith Development Goals by young people and partner organisations
- Youth recommendations to the G20IF India 2023 and beyond (Appendix 1)
- In the activity planning session young people discussed tools and techniques to build and sustain interfaith engagement in their communities.
- 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.
- Young people presented their previous interfaith activities and some share planned activities for the next six months



TESTIMONIALS

"I loved the cohesion between people from different origins and background, they were open minded and felt free to share their stories and knowledge, I made friends there"

"The experiences I had were good. Before coming to the forum, I had not expected it to go like this. The forum exceeded my expectations. Everything went fine, on time, and was well organized. I did not feel any kind of mismanagement. The important thing is that I noticed we all got to know each other through activities during the forum and outside conversations during lunch and travel time. It was really nice meeting people from so many countries with different cultures. Through this forum, I have gained an understanding of interfaith events. Overall, it was a really fun experience to learn, understand, and get together during all 3-4 days."

"We can learn a lot, relate a lot, empathize a lot and grow a lot just by listening to the other side" - one thing I experienced myself in GYIIF 2023 and am hopeful to include in my initiative planning. I realized that Religious Literacy is not about promoting one's faith, it is about understanding own religious message and its implication.



TESTIMONIALS



Anojitha Sivaskaran • 2nd
Peace and Youth Advocate
1yr •

Delighted with the opportunity to spend four days at the Global Youth Interfaith & Intercultural Forum in Qatar. Being surrounded by so many inspiring young people from diverse backgrounds was empowering, and I am grateful for the connections I made.

I had an amazing time engaging with panel discussions, speeches & training sessions, networking, learning from experts, exchanging ideas, and most importantly exploring the culture and traditional places of Qatar.

Many thanks to **A Common Word Among the Youth (ACWAY)**, **Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers**, and @Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue:)

Yes!! we, young people call governments, leaders and policymakers to remain accountable and ensure sufficient funding and the inclusion of young people at all levels of interfaith peace-building processes!

[#youthleadership](#) [#empowerment](#) [#networking](#) [#interfaith](#) [#srilanka](#)
[#DICD](#) [#interfaithdialogue](#) [#gyiif2023](#)



Alaa Alsewid (She/Her) • 2nd
Campaign Consultant @ IFRC | Social Media Strategy, Storytelling
1yr •

Delighted to spend four days at the Global Youth Interfaith & Intercultural Forum in **#Qatar**. Being surrounded by so many inspiring young people from diverse backgrounds was empowering, and I am grateful for the connections I made.

The forum's aim was to strengthen the role of young people in promoting interfaith and intercultural harmony. The forum organized by **A Common Word Among the Youth (ACWAY)** and Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue included various activities and interactions related to youth, such as intercultural and interfaith dialogue workshops, training, networking and social activities.

[#youth4peace](#) [#peacebuilding](#) [#interfaithdialogue](#) [#interfaithharmony](#)
[#acway](#) [#training](#) [#networking](#) [#connections](#)



FELLOWS' ACTIVITIES HIGHLIGHTS

Vladislav Artiukhov (Russia)

delivered an activity called "Intercultural Dialogues" in Erfurt, Germany on June 9, 2023, that engaged twenty young people from Erfurt and Thuringen region who come from various cultural and religious backgrounds. The activity involved youth from 10 countries. The workshop aimed to contribute to the culture of peace in the local community, reflecting on the current realities and challenges for migrants and building personal bonds between the participants.



Kudzaishe Manenji

(Zimbabwe) organized an online webinar, "Religious Literacy: the Gateway to Sustainable Peace" on July 28, 2023, at 5 pm GMT. The webinar featured leaders of different faith traditions: Dr Gusha (Global Institute for Peace); Dr Yehuda (ACWAY fellow), Dr Sekou Marafa (Doha International Centre for Interreligious Dialogue).

INTERNATIONAL
ONLINE WEBINAR
ON RELIGIOUS LITERACY IN COLLABORATION WITH
ACWAY
A Common Word Among the Youth

THEME: _____
**RELIGIOUS LITERACY THE
GATEWAY TO SUSTAINABLE
PEACE** _____

28
JULY 2023
TIME:
15:00hrs
GMT

MODERATOR
Reverend
Kudzaishe Manenji -
ACWAY Fellow Moderator

SPEAKERS
Doctor **Gusha** -
Executive Director Global
Institute for Peace

Doctor **Sekou Marafa**
Doha International Centre
for Interreligious Dialogue
DIDD-Gater

Doctor **Yehuda Silverman**
ACWAY Fellow

FELLOWS' ACTIVITIES HIGHLIGHTS



Anja Fahlenkamp (Germany)

and her initiative Faiths in Tune brought together 50 youths of diverse backgrounds from Austria, Germany, Italy, Israel and Palestine - including many kids with refugee and migrant backgrounds - at 'Knupfwerk" summer camp in Rome, Italy in July/August 2023 for 10 days of music, theatre, interfaith and intercultural fun and friendship.



Manar Ouaritni (Morocco)

organized several sessions of Candle-making workshops for women. Bringing together women from various cultural and religious backgrounds, the workshop aims to share the space and help women acquire new technical skills to be able to develop a potential income-generating activity and contribute to their financial independence.

ONLINE ENGAGEMENTS



ACWAY
A Common Word Among the Youth

Sunday, 11 June 2023
10.00AM CST 15.00PM GMT 22.00PM WIB

Fellow Talks

Post-Forum Gathering
A check-in and check-up
GYIIF2023

ACWAY Fellow Talks Webinar Series

- Explore ideas and examples of activities.
- Share your own activities.
- Come through with your questions.
- Collaborate and re-connect.
- Find out about future events and opportunities.

For more information, contact: info@acway.org

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



A fellow-designed and fellow-led initiative

**The Next Generation:
Youth in Interfaith Dialogue**

Sunday, 17 September 2023
15:00 CET

- Connect** with fellow practitioners
- Share** initiatives, and gain insights
- Reflect** on navigating the world of interreligious dialogue
- Empower:** Share strategies and ideas on how to make a difference in your community.

ACWAY
A Common Word Among the Youth
Fellow Talks

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INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENTS: A GLOBAL IMPACT

G20 Interfaith Forum engagements (India)

Throughout the year, ACWAY actively participated in G20 Interfaith Forum-related events, making our presence felt on the international stage.

In May 2023, our fellows from the region **Jigyasa Gulati**, **Anojitha Sivaskaran**, and **Nitish Barole** sparked conversations at the [IF20 event in Delhi, India](#).

Meanwhile, our endeavours at the [20IF in Pune, India](#) in September 2023 showcased our dedication to fostering global collaboration and understanding by amplifying youth voices.



It was surprising to see that very few young people were participating at an event that is meant to provide recommendations to policy-makers. Youth were discussed but only under the category of 'children' that submerges our actual needs.

Glad to be the only young panellist on the event and talk about the mechanisms to make education system more inclusive. Thanks to ACWAY for this great learning opportunity!

JIGYASA GULATI

INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENTS: A GLOBAL IMPACT



Parliament of the World's Religions, August 2023, USA

ACWAY fellows based in North America came together in full force to facilitate a session titled **'Religion, (In-)Justice, and Human Rights: A Global Response through Local Action.'**

Led by Riley Anders and supported by **Sara Rahim, Tahil Sharma, Skyler Oberst, and Vasu Bandu**, the session explored the role of personal stories and grassroots interfaith practices in the global movement for justice.



COP28, December 2023, UAE

our distinguished fellows **Greshma P. Raju** ('EcoPeace Cafe) and **Abhay Sachal** ('Break the Divide') shared their experiences on leading the projects related to faith and environment, noting the rise of eco-anxiety among young people and the importance of faith and community-based activism to counter it. The team called for global collaboration on the Interfaith Development Goals (IDGs).

SPOTLIGHT ON INDIVIDUAL ACHIEVEMENTS: SHAPING THE NARRATIVE

We're immensely proud of the individual Fellows' contributions that have shaped our narrative in the global arena.

Iiris Laino participated in the **Advisory Group meeting of the Network for Religions and Traditional Peacemakers** in Finland this October and shared ACWAY's experience in regional interfaith peacebuilding initiatives at one of the Learning Labs, focusing on perspectives from Europe. Her eloquence and insights left an indelible mark on the discussions, reinforcing our commitment to promoting peace and understanding.

Similarly, **Liliya KHASANOVA's** impactful presence at the **PaRD Annual Forum** in Berlin in October underscored our dedication to collaborative efforts for sustainable development. Her engagement exemplified our commitment to being active participants in forums that shape the global discourse on religion and development.



STAFF & EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

THE PEOPLE BEHIND ACWAY



It would be difficult to accomplish all the results without an international and diverse ACWAY team that works tirelessly across seven countries and time zones.

Programming Team (Volunteers):

Izzy Ben Ebrahim, South Africa - ACWAY fellow since 2015

Riley Anderson - USA - ACWAY fellow since 2021

Marketing Team (Volunteers):

Gabrielle Hayashi - Brazil - ACWAY fellow since 2019

Hira Aftab - UK - ACWAY fellow since 2021

Pavel Rehak, Czech Republic - ACWAY fellow since 2019

Staff Members:

Rawaad Mahyub, UK - ACWAY Executive Director

Liliya Khasanova, Russia - Operations Manager

Should you have any questions about the content of this report, please email me at liliia@acway.org
The financial report will be shared separately