

A COMMON WORD AMONG THE YOUTH (ACWAY)

OCTOBER 2021

# G20 YOUTH INTERFAITH FORUM SUMMARY REPORT

## G20 YOUTH INTERFAITH FORUM

*Interfaith as Activism, Dialogue as Healing*

Bologna, Italy

11-12 SEPTEMBER 2021

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**PREPARED BY**

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YIF20 PROJECT MANAGER

**ACWAY**  
A Common Word Among the Youth

**YIF20**   
G20 YOUTH INTERFAITH FORUM



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# OVERVIEW

A Common Word Among the Youth (ACWAY) is a global youth movement that brings together young interfaith practitioners 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.

ACWAY has organized five forums to date: four in-person international forums in Morocco, Australia, Sudan, and Azerbaijan and one online international forum for the UN World Interfaith Harmony Week in February 2021.

In 2021, ACWAY became the Global Youth partner to the G20 Interfaith Forum (IF20) and chairs the Youth Working Group of the IF20. This report summarizes the first G20 *Youth* Interfaith Forum (YIF20) that was organized by ACWAY in partnership with the IF20.

The YIF20 theme for this year was “*Interfaith as Activism, Dialogue as Healing*”. Through this youth-focused forum, ACWAY hoped to continue creating spaces for interfaith practitioners to come together to share ideas, experiences and opportunities to engage in promoting peace, understanding and solidarity among diverse faith and philosophical communities.

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# LOCATION & VENUE



The Interfaith Youth Forum was held at the Royal Hotel Carlton in Bologna, Italy on 11-12 September 2021, ahead of the main G20 Interfaith Forum held at the Pallazo Re Enzo on 12-14 September 2021.

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# PARTICIPANTS



After a competitive application process that ran from July 6 – 27, 2021, we received over 550 applications from individuals who applied to attend the YIF20.

Fifty young people, including existing ACWAY fellows, were selected to represent their communities in Bologna (of which 47 were able to travel).

Despite the Covid-19 pandemic, we tried to ensure good diversity and representation. The ACWAY forum team issued an [Inclusion Statement](#) to address the restraints caused by the global epidemic.

- **47 YOUTH PARTICIPANTS**
- **30 COUNTRIES**
- **12 FAITH AND SECULAR TRADITIONS**
  
- **26 FEMALE PARTICIPANTS**
- **21 MALE PARTICIPANTS**
- **24 AGED 18-25**
- **23 AGED 26-35**
  
- **12 EXISTING ACWAY MEMBERS**
- **6 MEMBERS OF THE ACWAY PLANNING TEAM**

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# PARTNERS AND COLLABORATORS

The Forum was co-hosted by FSCIRE in partnership with the G20 Interfaith Forum Association and with generous support from the Stirling Foundation,

And in collaboration with several partners including We the World, KAICIID Dialogue Centre, Religions for Peace, United Religions Initiative and The Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers.

We would like to say a heartfelt "Thank You" to partners and collaborators for contributing and supporting the YIF20.



## IN COLLABORATION WITH



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# PROGRAM DETAILS

**The main objectives of the G20 Youth Interfaith Forum were to:**

1. Develop a growing network of international interfaith practitioners who are equipped to deliver multicultural and interfaith activities in their own communities;
2. Learn about and share tools, experiences and examples of how young people put interfaith dialogue and peacebuilding into practice;
3. Deliver a skill-based, outcomes-driven programme that allows participants to contextualize their work and collaborate across contexts;
4. Facilitate and establish collaborative processes between grassroots and international interfaith youth organizations; and
5. Prepare attendees to engage effectively and strategically within the G20 Interfaith Forum framework and beyond.

Having in mind the aforementioned objectives, the ACWAY Programming Team sought to create an interactive and inclusive environment where participants could learn & share skills and experiences.

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.



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# SESSIONS



- **LOCAL AND GLOBAL ENGAGEMENTS (ACWAY FELLOWS)**
- **DIALOGUE SESSION (KAICIID)**
- **FACILITATED NETWORKING SESSION**
- **HEALING THROUGH MULTI-FAITH COLLABORATION (RELIGIONS FOR PEACE)**
- **ACWAY SKILLS SHARE (ACWAY)**
- **MAKING OUR MARK: ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR EFFECTIVE MULTI-FAITH ACTION (UNITED RELIGIONS INITIATIVE)**
- **THE IMPORTANCE OF E-ADVOCACY IN THE AGE OF COVID-19 (THE NETWORK FOR RELIGIONS AND TRADITIONAL PEACEMAKERS)**
- **PANEL DISCUSSION: “YOUTH-LED PARADIGM SHIFT IN INTERFAITH SPACES”**

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# MEDIA



- **YIF20 WAS HIGHLIGHTED ON THE WEBSITES, NEWSLETTER, BLOGS OF INTERFAITH ORGANIZATIONS**
  - G20 YOUTH INTERFAITH FORUM SHINES LIGHT ON THE IMPORTANCE OF YOUTH INCLUSION IN PEACEBUILDING ([LINK](#))
  - RELIGIONS FOR PEACE'S REFLECTIONS ON THE G20 INTERFAITH FORUM ([LINK](#))
  - **REPORT ON THE G20 INTERFAITH FORUM IN ITALY BY ARIZONA FAITH NETWORK ([LINK](#))**
- **YIF20 WAS FEATURED IN THE EPISODE OF THE 'WHAT A RELIEF!' PODCAST (LED BY ISLAMIC RELIEF USA) ([LINK](#)).**
- **MEDIA FOOTAGE FROM BOTH DAYS OF THE EVENT CAN BE FOUND [HERE](#)**

# REFLECTIONS OF PARTICIPANTS ONLINE

- **AHMED ABDIRAHMAN SAID, FINLAND: [READ HERE](#)**
- **TAMARA VUKIČEVIĆ, CROATIA: [READ HERE](#)**
- **ERIN ADARVE, USA [READ HERE](#)**
- **ZAINAB CHAMOUN, LEBANON [READ HERE](#)**

**Cendra Karam** is with **Samet Shabani** and **13 others.** September 18 · 🌐

Last week I had the chance to be part of the Youth Interfaith Forum #YIF20 in #Bologna sharing thoughts about #dialog and #interfaith practices with 50 participants from more than 30 countries around the world.

The fruitful #discussions we held, the precious meetings with #religious\_leaders and #policy\_makers made my experience so special and inspiring on the power of #youth in promoting #peace and #building\_bridges and facing #hate\_speech.

We do believe in changing the world to a better place where #diversity is recognized as tool to grow, shine and #healing!

For all people I met, thank you for sharing your stories, your thoughts, your aspirations, your challenges, your experiences, your achievements, your struggles, and your smiles.. It was an added value to my journey! I promise to recall these special moments and to make this mission mine also!

Last and not least, I thank A Common Word Among the Youth (ACWAY) for giving me this opportunity and creating this safe space for all of us.

#timetoheal #G20YouthInterfaithForum



**Abhayjeet Singh Sachal** September 23 · 🌐

Last week, I had the incredible opportunity to participate in the G20 Interfaith Form in Bologna, Italy.

From speaking about my work building [Break The Divide](#) at the Youth Forum to attending sessions with global faith leaders at the main event, it was an experience I'll never forget.

What did I learn?

- Youth have a lot of power to create the change we want to see. At the Youth Forum, I met young leaders from all sorts of backgrounds that were making positive change in their own communities. It was inspiring to see.
- Faith groups can play important roles in reaching the hardest to reach communities and forging peace. As a student of Global Health and Peace, Conflict & Justice, this experience showed me the importance of interfaith and intercultural cooperation to reach the UN SDGs.
- Most people don't know much (or anything) about my identity. From members of the G20 Interfaith Advisory Board to strangers in the streets of Italy, I was often asked what my turban means. As a Sikh, my faith is rooted in the principles of compassion, justice, and service - advocacy and education is a huge part of that. I'm looking forward to building programs to not only promote interfaith cooperation but also religious and cultural education nationally and globally.

I leave this experience feeling incredibly inspired to continue working with local, national, and international partners to build a more inclusive world. I'm excited to continue building Break The Divide with my amazing team to foster global connections rooted in empathy and build systems for local youth-led action.

Thank you to ACWAY and the entire organizing team for making this experience possible. A special shoutout to all my new friends and mentors from the forum.

#g20interfaith #g20italy #interfaith #interfaithdialogue #breakthedivide



# REFLECTIONS OF PARTICIPANTS

**Merette Ramses**  
September 22 · 🌍

On this [#internationalpeaceday](#), I am grateful to have been invited to represent Your Egyptian Doula at the [#G20InterfaithForum](#) as part of the [#youth #delegation](#) through [A Common Word Among the Youth](#)

It was a honor to be selected to share the [#closingremarks](#) at the [#interfaithyouthforum](#), starting off this year's [#G20](#) event. It was an even greater honor connecting with these fellows turned [#family!](#)

Through [#dialogue](#) with political and [#religiousleaders](#), meeting inspirational young [#changemakers](#) and [#bridgebuilders](#), and responding to the call to [#disrupt](#) systems, structures, and stereotypes that inhibit [#equity](#) and [#inclusion](#), my [#takeaway](#) is [#community](#) is [#healing](#). 🌟🤝🌍

[#G20YouthInterfaithForum](#) [#YIF2021](#)  
[#InterfaithInAction](#) [#G20Interfaith](#)  
[#timetoheal](#) [#youthled](#) [#socialimpact](#)

**Parth Bhansali** is in Bologna, Italy.  
September 17 · 🌍

This past week, I had the privilege to be a part of something I wouldn't have thought would happen in my wildest dreams. With the support of [@ACWAY](#) and [Interfaith Youth Core](#), I attended the [#G20 \[Youth & Main\]](#) Interfaith Forum.

I met leaders of various ages, experiences, professions, passions, and backgrounds to share/discuss our mutual devotion to advancing interfaith work. Here are my highlights:

- Ran a networking session on our first day to help connect attendees. Building relationships and introducing people to each other is something that makes me so happy, so this was super special to me. Sudan's Minister of Religious Affairs attended and had the best time, which made it even more memorable. Thank you Sara for the opportunity!
- Met various faith and industry leaders after attending their talks. These include the likes of Dr. Azza Karam, Cardinal [#MatteoZuppi](#), Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I of Constantinople - known as the [#GreenPope](#), Marco Alvera - CEO of Snam, Dr. Elizabeta Kitanovic - Executive Secretary of the CEC, and many others!
- Collaborated with 50 fellow young innovators and changemakers from 30 nations, who remind me that the future is going to be better and brighter than any of us can imagine. Met some new mates that I'm looking forward to building an international community with!
- Explored the gorgeous city of Bologna (and food capital of Italy) over 6 days and enjoyed it's old world charm, people, attractions, and incredible meals (especially gelato).

Major thanks to Azizah Syiami Mutik, Liliya Khasanova, Melisa Trad Malmud, Carolina Yagas, Pavel Tomáš Řehák, Sara Rahim for all of their hard work that ensured that the conference still happened through the tribulations of COVID-19. As a new addition to the [#ACWAY](#) family, I can't wait to see everyone again next year!

Lastly, thanks to my manager Bobby Hennig for supporting me to actively pursue this while I continue building my career at Groupon!

**127** **12 Comments**

**Vasu Bandhu** is with Jessica Roland and Tamara Vukičević in Bologna, Italy.  
September 18 · 🌍

[G20 Interfaith Forum- IF20](#) , Bologna, Italy  
[G20 Youth Interfaith Forum - A Common Word Among the Youth](#)  
Panel Discussion: "Youth-led Paradigm Shift in Interfaith Spaces"  
Thankful for participating in the closing panel 🙏



# EVALUATION

**Out of 20 people who completed the post-forum survey:**

- 19 people (94%) found this Forum useful/beneficial.
- 20 people stated they felt they had the opportunity to share their ideas, questions, or comments in a safe space.
- 20 stated that the Forum met their expectations.

**Participants noted that the breakout sessions were:**

- Informative 16 (94%)
- Interactive 19 (94%)
- Engaging 19 (94%)
- Inspiring 19 (94%)
- Empowering 18 (90%)
- Inclusive 17 (85%)

# TESTIMONIALS

" I had several great moments throughout the conference, and my main takeaway from this event is that diversity is a powerful tool that can bring people together. Despite what people can believe, I think we have more things in common than what we believe. I also learned that the youth has to start claiming its place with decision-makers, and to be engaging in these events with influential leaders, we are getting one step closer."



" I could not have spent those 120 hours in a more impactful way. In a nutshell, my network has broadened. Now I'm part of an aspiring network of young interfaith practitioners from all over the globe. I learned about their backgrounds and countries, and the challenges of interfaith activism in their context. I got inspired by their work on the ground and would love to benefit from their insights on my own work on the ground. I'm also more motivated to get back to interfaith work. Over the past year, my belief in the effectiveness of interfaith activism was really challenged by everything happening around, from economic crises and political exploitation. After the YIF, I'm motivated again to strengthen my belief in interfaith, which is part of my personality, and try to work again with local communities on the ground from a non-traditional perspective."

" The Forum had a solid impact on motivation and connections. After the Forum, I concretized my long lasting idea to establish a Program on Interfaith Dialogue within the CSO that I'm leading with. I strongly believe that the networking will have a baseline impact in sustainability with projects and activities that will be undertaken in scope of this Program."



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# RELEVANT DOCUMENTS

ACWAY fellows produced the **Youth Policy Brief** ([full text](#)) that was shared with G20IF beforehand.

Highlights of the brief are here:

<https://www.g20interfaith.org/2021-policy-briefs/>

ACWAY shared its flagship initiative: the **Interfaith Development Goals (IDGs)**, as one of the main recommendations to be put forward to the G20 partners.

ACWAY also shared a number of statements including:

A concise **Statement on the Role of youth** in the **G20IF** ([full text](#)).

An **Inclusion Statement** to address the restraints caused by the global COVID epidemic ([full text](#)).

# OPPORTUNITIES & NEXT STEPS

- **YIF20** has brought together an incredible cohort of young interfaith practitioners who are committed to interfaith action. In keeping with the selection criteria, YIF participants are expected to deliver at least one interfaith activity in the six months following the forum under the common theme of "Interfaith as Activism, Dialogue as Healing".
- ACWAY will continue building new partnerships and strengthening existing relationships with partners, donors, foundations, and other like-minded organizations.
- With the G20IF, ACWAY in its role in chairing the Youth Working Group, will continue to support and champion the institutionalisation of youth involvement at the G20 Interfaith Forum.
- In the course of the next few months, ACWAY will be developing a multi-year strategy for forums (YIF20, ACWAY Forums, regional meetings), in-between programming, and strengthening an alumni network.



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# STAFF & TEAM MEMBERS

## THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE YIF20



The **YIF20 Programming Team** consisted of 11 team members (of staff and volunteers) from 10 countries who worked for 5 months to bring the Forum to life.

### **Programming Team:**

- **Izzy Ben Ebrahim**, South Africa - ACWAY fellow since 2015
- **Rodge Lelis**, Philippines - ACWAY fellow since 2017
- **Jolyda Sou**, Cambodia - ACWAY fellow since 2015

### **Marketing Team:**

- **Melisa Trad Malmmod**, Argentina - ACWAY fellow since 2015
- **Pavel Rehak**, Czech Republic - ACWAY fellow since 2019

### **Admin Team:**

- **Carolina Yagas**, Argentina - ACWAY fellow since 2015
- **Azizah Mutik**, Indonesia - ACWAY fellow since 2015
- **Lina Salim**, Singapore - ACWAY fellow since 2017

### **Project Leads:**

- **Rawaad Mahyub**, UK - ACWAY Executive Director
- **Sara Rahim**, USA - Programs Manager
- **Liliya Khasanova**, Russia - YIF20 Project Manager

Should there be any questions about the content of this report, please email [liliia@acway.org](mailto:liliia@acway.org)

The financial report is shared separately.