

FINAL NARRATIVE REPORT

International Seminar on Human Rights and Freedom of Religion and Beliefs
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For distribution to:

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1. Assessment of the overall implementation of the seminar activities and themes

The main activities & topics that were covered during the seminar are divided into three categories. The first category are those activities that aim at **integrating, building trust and confidence**, “breaking the ice” as they called but most importantly, it has also a very strong **skills development component** where the participants learned by **action and reflection methodology**. This section of the program prepares the participants to be more open, tolerant and accepting. This methodology involves a lot of experiential learning and it motivates participants to think beyond their own comfort zones, especially when meeting new people of different background and experience. It involved a lot of group works and team work thus creating space for cooperation and looking for common ground. Some of the activities taken on this category are as follows: exercises on team building & intercultural communication, active listening, leadership, advocacy campaign, networking & action planning.

The second category of activities are called session on **thematic issues**. This category involves what the participants have learned on the skills workshops they go through as mentioned above and then build on the discussions and debate from what they already know (e.g. experiences from work, home, relationships, studies, congregations, associations, etc). This category is the main bulk of the program because its main theme is discussed and worked out here. As the name of the program implies, the main issues tackled on this section are as follows: Human Rights & the Rights to Freedom of Religion & Beliefs, Basic introduction to International Law & Enforcement of Human Rights at the international system, the core International & Regional Human Rights Instruments and Mechanism for the promotion and protection of Human Rights in general & Freedom of Religion & Beliefs in particular, Inter-religious and interfaith dialogue, Religious tolerance & the separation of religion and state & strategic & Action Planning, Building Bridges and Solidarity

The third category of activities is called **immersion and institutional visit** to human rights institution & sacred sites. This portion of the program is very important as it deepens the understanding of participants on the main issues that they have talked about and most importantly, it gives the thematic discussion a FACE. Participants were moved and awed by the sacred sites that they have visited, it has given them a wider perspective and at the same time give enough time for reflection, whether inside the bus to the Jordan River or floating in the Dead Sea and trying to imagine how it is like to be in this region thousand years back? The answer might be inevitable but at least, the glimpse of the past has provided participants a better view of the future.

1.1. Assessment of the results of the Seminar

In terms of assessing the result of the seminar, the organizer has developed an evaluation questionnaire where it does not only evaluate the result of the project but most importantly its relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. You’ll see the next part of this report as the summary of the evaluation. I must add that the seminar was also assess and evaluated twice during the whole duration of the seminar itself, once towards the middle of the seminar and the second one towards the end. Those two mid –seminar evaluations were proved to be very useful as it give us the organizer the chance to adjust

the content and training methodology based on the expectations and suggestions of the participants. That was, participants felt that they have an ownership of the learning process.

Expectation- during the expectation check exercise, participants were asked what do they expect to learn from the seminar and below are their expectations:

- To learn and practice human rights, dialogue and exchange with other cultures through various means.
- To deepen understanding of the principles of freedom of religion and beliefs
- To learn how the UN system enforced international human rights law especially on the rights to freedom of religion and beliefs.
- Increased knowledge about other religions and faiths.
- To learn how other youth organization are working and advocating human rights.
- To share experiences and deep listening from each other.
- To have a first hand account about the Middle East and other countries
- To build bridges and construct relations across national, religious and socio-economic borders.
- Learn how to monitor human rights, which instruments are there and which mechanisms are in place.
- Explore Jordan through visiting different sites and have a better knowledge about this country and its vital role in promoting peace in the region.
- Finding the real meaning for “Freedom of religion”
- Develop concrete action plans on way forward.

Results: at the end of the seminar, the participants were asked what they learnt during the seminar. Below are their main responses:

- Learned how to interact and work with passionate and active young people coming from over 20 countries representing a very diverse ethnic, cultural, linguistic, age, socio-economic and religious and faith background.
- Learned about human rights in general and the right to freedom of religion and beliefs in particular.
- Had an amazing experiences and life changing experience visiting the sacred sites and important landmarks of Jordan, which are indeed a treasure to the whole humanity!
- Learn how to be confident and trust others, accepting others opinions and opening my mind.
- Building good relationships and partners from different countries
- Learned how to manage a project and how to established linkages with other youth organizations.
- Understand gender and how to work with women (especially young women) from different religion.
- Learned specific skills that are important not only to my work but most importantly to my personal skills development.
- I learned how to develop tools for concrete projects
- Gain a deep understanding on the UN system, its principal organs, structures and mandates on human rights.

- Enhancing self confidence
- It has improved my self esteem and communication skills

Relevance: In terms of relevance of the issues in relation to the situation of the participant's community or organisation, they identified the following as most relevant and less relevant:

More Relevant	Less Relevant
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enforcement of Human Rights and Freedom of Religions and Beliefs in the UN System: Instruments and Mechanisms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion of violation toward other
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercise on Human Rights Advocacy & Monitoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coming into terms with the politics of conflict between religions and the Middle East
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion and sharing on the issue of Freedom of Religion & Beliefs 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inter-Cultural Dialogues and Learning 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizational learning and institutional visit 	

Efficiency: In terms of efficiency, participants were asked which were the positive and the negative aspects of the organising and the methodology of the program (team-building exercise, cases, group presentations, institutional visits, group discussions, videos, etc)?

Positives	Negatives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The experiential learning methodology which provide a good team-building exercise, engaging discussion and trust building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not enough time
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suitable and productive cases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • short group discussions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very useful & enjoyable institutional visits & challenging case studies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • not enough hand out
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversity of the Trainers & experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • too much subjects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intercultural Night 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • long trips & time management
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very good lectures on Human Rights and Freedom of Religion & Beliefs 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very good ice breaking games 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very good training materials and visual arts such videos & power points. 	

Effectiveness: In terms of the effectiveness of the training, participants were asked to share if it easy or difficult to relate the information provided to their own experiences and did the seminar allow them to draw their own conclusions on the subject presented?

Most of the participants felt that it was very easy to relate the information provided to their own experiences, and also that the seminar allow them to draw their own conclusions on the subjects which were been presented during the seminar.

Was the terminology and examples used in the different presentations of the seminar easy to understand?

For 62.5% of the participants, the terminology and examples used in the different presentations of the seminar were very easy to understand, but on the other hand for 37.5% of the participants found them a little difficult and that was for various reasons such as for those who has problems in the English language and the diversity of experiences of the participants (some do not have any direct experience working with human rights, others are already practitioner and trainer)

Impact: On the issue of impact, participants were asked whether there are there things they would have prioritised differently, based on the knowledge they have acquired.

Most of the participant showed interest & passion especially with the main two themes of the seminar: Human Rights & the Rights to Freedom of Religion as their priority in this seminar and they did so through out the whole duration of the program.

To expound a bit more the impact of the seminar, participants were asked what did they learned from each other, could they relate or share their experience to other participants?

Regardless of place of origin, race or religion ...everyone has the same types of problems and issues- minority rights was an evident issue when the challenge to the rights to freedom of religion and beliefs arises. Some participants found it hard to learn or accept certain aspects in other culture but that gave them a chance to reflect on their own culture. What was felt among participants is that peace can be achieved only if we can found for a common ground. Having the chance to live together- learn from each other, share commonalities and celebrate differences. By living that, this experience of coming to Jordan together and share it to others, that's a real life changing experience. Some participant even went ahead and identified what were the policy gaps of their own government when in comes to building a more tolerant community. The seminar has indeed open doors and windows of opportunities to the participants; it has opened heart and builds bridges

Sustainability: In order to find out how the participants will sustain the knowledge learned, they were asked what elements of the knowledge acquired will they be able to use in their future work or organisation- and for what purpose:

- The enforcement of human rights at the UN System which includes the specific human rights instruments and mechanism
- Using art as a teaching method
- Ethical aspects especially in religion
- Team – building exercises
- Learning the many facets of the rights to freedom of religion (e.g. religious dialogue, interfaith education, separation of state and religion, etc)

Ideas and recommendations: In addition, participants were also requested to provide additional suggestions, ideas and recommendations in order to improve the seminar for the next group of participants.

- Making the seminar into 10 days.
- Shorten the time duration of the daily activities (9am to 6 pm) to leave time for socialization after 6pm.
- Highlighting role of religion in peace-making.
- Making number of participants more.
- Making number of participants less.
- Clarify the goals of each exercise.
- Giving seminars at same place or venue
- More women participants.
- Provide time ahead of schedules.
- Delaying tourism aspect to end of program.
- More rest times for participants.
- More focus on human rights and youth rights.
- Punctuality (being on time)
- More open discussions.
- Better sleeping room.
- Making transportation to seminars more comfortable.
- More NGOs and other partner's participation.
- More concise, time-conscious and consistent.
- Procedures for problem solving.
- Keeping groups in same age group if possible.
- More training skills.
- More case studies.
- Less academic issues.

General Impression: To give you a general impression of the whole program, participants rated the impact, effectiveness, relevance, results and sustainability of the seminar from 1 to 5(5 being the highest, 1 the lowest).

- 1= 1 (3%)
- 2= 3 (9%)
- 3= 13 (41%)
- 4= 8 (25%)
- 5= 7 (22%)

1.2. Outcome on both the final beneficiaries &/or target group) and the situation in the target country or target region which the seminar addressed.

There is no doubt that the action has achieved both its overall & specific objective that is to foster a spirit of understanding among young people and youth workers of diverse

ethnic, religious and spiritual backgrounds. For 5 days, over 40 young people coming from more than 20 countries did not only share their experiences & discuss what they have in mind but also acted upon them by reaching out to each other and develop such a network which managed to come up with great ideas for follow up.

The Middle East was chosen as the venue of this year's seminar due to popular demand from young people who have attended last year's Human Rights conference in the Netherlands. With the long standing human rights issues in the region (especially the Israeli and Palestine conflict), young people are interested to find out what's really happening in the region. Most importantly, young people want to speak to those people who go through such experiences on a daily basis.

During the seminar, dialogues and open spaces were created for young people to come and speak, share their experiences but most importantly, build network and create opportunities to communicate, develop actions and formulate solutions for the crisis that's affecting the lives and futures of peoples.

The truth is that it was very tense situation in the beginning of the seminar and that's because participants were talking about issues that are closest their hearts and experiences. However, with the diverse forms of learning and activities made, participants change their attitudes and started to look at each others as partners and colleagues, rather than just bystanders.

2. Assessment of the overall implementation of the seminar activities and themes

The last day of the seminar was dedicated for an **Action Planning** and during that session, participants did an initial brainstorming on the immediate actions as a follow up to the seminar and later on, started to develop both short and long term plans. Some of the plans are to be carried out at the local or community level, national, regional and international level, some will be carried in an organizational basis while others will require inter-organizational partnership and collaboration. Majority of the proposed follow up activities concerns capacity building and training, arts & music as instruments for promoting human rights, solidarity and peace through exchange among youth. Below are the envisage follow up activities as a result of the seminar:

- **UN Human Rights Advocacy Fellowship & Training Programme.** This project is a step up human rights training and capacity building programme in order to equip the target groups in the promotion and protection of human rights from the international, regional and national/local levels. The training programme will involve human rights and human rights monitoring training programme at the local and national level (through the participants organizations), then move into the regional level (inter-regional collaboration) and finally, it would culminate into a fellowship program at the UN Office in Geneva in accordance with the sessions of the Human Rights Council, Universal Periodic Review and the sessions of the UN Treaty Bodies.
- **Strengthening Muslim Women's Peace Movement in Peace building in Asia.** This project is designed into two categories of strategies which are documentation and linking & learning. Documentation means a process of

recording Muslim women's works relating to peace promotion, through feminist based research and data base. Linking and learning means a facilitating process in Asia level to update Muslim women's works on peace building that exchange of knowledge and experience would take place in which Muslim women in Asia are able to share innovative approaches, strategies to confront patriarchal society, fundamentalism, neo liberalism and injustice system. This project is being developed with the Asian Muslim Action Network (AMAN) based in Bangkok, Thailand- an international network which brings together individuals, groups and associations of Muslims in Asia to a progressive approach to Islam.

- **Interfaith Youth Concert-** - This idea came out as a result of exchange of ideas on how music could be used as an instrument in bringing young people from diverse backgrounds together and also used music to raise awareness on human rights. It would culminate into an interfaith youth concert- putting together a repertoire of sacred spiritual songs & combined it with instruments, body expression – dance- choreography
- **Multi-religious Centre-** This is an online resource platform and community where young people can share about their religions and beliefs.
- **Interfaith Arts Summer Camp-** A camp for young people working on arts projects. These include of different types: art, drama, dance, photography, etc
- **Regional Human Rights Monitoring Workshops.** There are two workshops proposed already:
 - *South-East Asia Regional Workshop* (Bangkok-Thailand) with the ARF-AMAN. The RFYN Coordinator and ARF-AMAN Youth Coordinator who participated in the seminar developed the project proposal and already submitted to the Australian Embassy in Bangkok for funding.
 - *European Regional Workshop* (Spain & Hungary). This proposal was developed by the participants from Spain and Hungary during the training. The proposal has been reviewed by the RFYN Coordinator who is helping them find some funders.

3. Mainstreaming Gender

As a human rights seminar and considering the diversity of religious and faith backgrounds of the participants, gender was considered in every stage of the action, from the planning, selection of participants, developing the theme of the seminar, implementation, monitoring and action planning. During the selection of participants, the participation of young women was given priority. Women participants were involved in running and leading the group exercises and group works and now they are leading the follow up activities in the region and the exchange of notes and experiences.

As such, one of the follow ups of the seminar is a project specifically addressing women and gender in peace building and human rights- Strengthening Muslim Women's Peace Movement in Peace building in Asia. **As mentioned above, this is a project** designed to document Muslim women's works relating to peace promotion, through feminist based research and data base and link it to education through facilitating processes within the region to update Muslim women's works on peace building where exchange of knowledge and experience would take place. In this project, it is also envisaged that Muslim women in Asia are able to share innovative

approaches, strategies to confront patriarchal society, fundamentalism, neo liberalism and injustice system. This project is being developed with the Asian Muslim Action Network (AMAN).

4. Monitoring and Evaluation of the Seminar.

As mentioned earlier, besides the final evaluation which was shared earlier, two mid – term evaluations were done on the seminar to give spaces for participants and organizer to come up with better strategies and ways forward.

In addition, two IARF elders (e.g. Rev. Yoshinobu Miyake & Rev. Takahiro Miwa) visited the seminar venue and they even participated in some of the sessions and likewise, advisers and friends of the Youth Spirit Centre (e.g. former member of the Jordanian Parliament & the Chief of the Youth Section of the Euro-Med Programme) have constantly visited and monitored the initiative during the whole duration of the seminar.

5. Lessons learned from the seminar and how has this learning been utilised and disseminated.

We have learned that there are many young people out there who are very passionate, willing to learn and act accordingly on the issue of Human Rights; which is not an issue that need to be to be discussing only, but rather a reality that we face in our daily lives.

That building bridges, creating spaces for dialogue and networking are important tools, establishing relations do not only enrich the window for future collaboration but also strengthen humanity's solidarity.

That there are enough resources in the world, we just need to learn how to share and use it wisely.

That we are made wise not by the recollection of our past, but by the responsibility for our future and with that, IARF and YSC looks forward to strengthen partnership and collaboration with the Euro-Med Youth Programme and all the partners in this seminar.

6. IARF Visibility

The seminar made a banner with the printed logo of the IARF, along with the logo of EURO-MED, the co-funder of the action and the Youth Spirit Centre- the host organization during the seminar. In addition to the banner, coffee mugs and T-shirts with the printed logos of the above mentioned organization were distributed to participants and partner organizations.

7. Publications on the Seminar

Participants produced movies, photo gallery, power point presentations & training modules during the skills workshops sessions at the seminar. All the outputs on these sessions were put together into as CD-ROM which will be distributed to all participants, partners and funders.