

## ACWAY Report for UN World Interfaith Harmony Week 2017

# “DIVERSITY”

### Background

A Common Word Among the Youth (ACWAY) is a movement of young peace ambassadors from around the world who believe that dialogue and interfaith and intercultural activities have the capacity to build strong, resilient and peaceful communities. Established in 2015, ACWAY is an extension of the 2007 'A Common Word between Us and You' initiative which received global acceptance translated through 138 high-profile signatories, dozens of publications, over 900 press coverage, 6 adopted university programs, 4 prestigious awards and the UN resolution of World Interfaith Harmony Week.

Following the 1<sup>st</sup> ACWAY Training and International Forum in Rabat Morocco in December 2015, 100 ACWAY fellows from over 74 countries pledged to deliver interfaith or/and intercultural activities in their respective society based on the context-specific issue in that region. Up to February 2017 ACWAY has delivered over 70 activities in various ranges of spectrums from dialogues, discussion, seminar, workshop, exhibition, cultural performance, online campaigns, photo contest and many more. The topics that are being brought up by ACWAY fellows vary such as interreligious gap, women empowerment, education for youth, sports, refugee crisis, media, etc.

ACWAY participated last year in the UN World Interfaith Harmony Week, and this year ACWAY fellows joined the celebration with global activities under the theme of DIVERSITY. Activities centered around this theme were conducted in many countries.

Added Value of ACWAY approach:

- 1) ACWAY is volunteer run – all activities are self-funded by the Fellows and the partners they bring on board
- 2) ACWAY is a youth led and driven movement of dedicated young people aged 18-40
- 3) ACWAY fellows are a mix of many faiths/religions/cultures (and none) from over 74 countries
- 4) ACWAY is about ACTION and the fellows do exactly that – deliver local, national and international activities to promote peace and understanding

This year the ACWAY fellows, during our 2<sup>nd</sup> International Forum in Brisbane, decided to deliver a series of activities under the common theme of DIVERSITY during the UN World Interfaith Harmony Week. **This demonstrated harmony in both collaboration and delivery, united under one common campaign.**

List of ACWAY activities for UN World Interfaith Harmony Week 2017

**1) Interfaith Harmony in Kolkata (Kolkata, INDIA)**

Euphrates Kolkata, CYPAN, Pace48 and ACWAY came together to document a case study. How *Durga Puja* (the biggest Hindu festival) was celebrated in Md Ali Park, in a Muslim locality and with the support of people who mostly belong to faiths other than Hinduism. It was done during the IHW 1-7<sup>th</sup> February with a team of 8 young people. We had several meetings on planning and arranging for the resources. The visit to Puja has been dedicated to build a communication, which resulted in great support from the Hindu community to contribute in making this historical event each year a grand success. The documentary was shot in their office over a period of two days and was then edited. The transcript was prepared and was approved by the participants we interviewed.

Documentation of activity:

<https://www.facebook.com/EuphratesKolkata16/videos/736804696474582/>



## 2) Diversity Talk (Dushanbe, TAJIKISTAN)

With main purpose to bring together young people from different backgrounds and involve them in discussions and inspire them for local action to make good things in diverse ways, a diversity talk was conducted in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. The participants were representatives of local high school and university ages around 16-20 years old to promote recognition of value of cultural variety and to promotion of an active role of youth in construction of intercultural dialogue in local communities through their visions of Diversity and Harmony.

Conducted on January 30<sup>th</sup> 2017, this activity is cooperation between ACWAY, Cultural Centre Bactria and local high schools and university as a part of campaign for the UN World Interfaith Harmony Week 2017.



### 3) Diversity in Modern Society / Colors of Diversity (Khudjand, TAJIKISTAN)

ACWAY Ambassador, Firusa Abdulaeva, working together with Tajik College of Culture and local youth are supporting the idea and initiative of students workshop to bring together the young people and involve them into the discussion of diversity with two main topics which were: **Diversity as Key for Understanding**, and **Existence with No Diversity**. The activity was also included:

- Story sharing
- Games, puzzles
- Hot discussions
- Playing situations
- Dialogue between two groups
- Watching short movie clips about Diversity.



This activity had over 40 attendees and participant activity involved in the discussion by leading the two different discussion groups and made motto of the workshop:

**World.Peace.Diversity**

#### 4) Istanbul Diversity Event (Istanbul, TURKEY)

In cooperation with Center for Cross Cultural Communication, Istanbul, ACWAY Fellow Khadija Dohry organized a diversity event on 12<sup>th</sup> of Feb that included the following activities as a follow up of World Interfaith Harmony week:

- A brief presentation on ACWAY and its youth involvement by Khadija
- An introductory presentation on the work of Cross Cultural Communication Center in Istanbul
- Table discussions on “Diversity and the role of the youth in promoting harmony” over breakfast
- A Calligraphy workshop
- An outdoor event that included visits to Mosques/Churches/synagogues in ISTANBUL

The objective of the project was to strengthen communication between young Istanbulians from different backgrounds and faiths



5) **Promoting ACWAY Message Among African Students in Turkey (Istanbul, TURKEY)**

In cooperation with African Student Research Center, Ankara, we held an event on counteracting violent extremism in Africa on 14<sup>th</sup> Jan 2017 and ACWAY Fellow Khadija Dohry delivered a presentation on the role of ACWAY as a youth movement in promoting peace and understanding as well as facilitated the discussions on the challenges faced in project implementation.



**6) ACWAY Interfaith & Diversity Harmony (Tamale, GHANA)**

On February 8, 2017; ACWAY Interfaith youth team of volunteers in Ghana had a training session on the implementation of their Interfaith camp; Diversity Harmony project in Kanvilli, a suburb of Tamale. A total of 9 youth volunteers offered to work on this project, the first session of training led by ACWAY fellow Inusah Akansoke Al-Hassan. The training concentrated on Interfaith and Diversity issues within the Kanvilli community. The aim was to raise awareness among residents of Kanvilli, a suburb of Tamale of the need for interreligious and diversity coexistence.



7) **ACWAY Interreligious Understanding & Cooperation (Tamale, GHANA)**

On February 19, 2017; in celebrating the UN World Interfaith Harmony Week 2017, ACWAY Interfaith youth team of volunteers in Ghana conducted a courtesy visit to the Winners Chapel International Church as part of fostering Interfaith Harmony. ACWAY fellow Inusah Akansoke Al-Hassan led a team of 8 volunteers to meet leaders of the Church to discuss issues on inter-religious cooperation within the Kanvilli community, a suburb of Tamale. The Church pledged its support for ACWAY and its social activities in fostering Interfaith Harmony in the Kanvilli community.



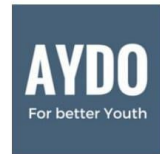


**8) Multiculturalism in Our Globalized World (Baku, AZERBAIJAN)**

On February 4, 2017, Caspian Business Center, Baku, Azerbaijan, ACWAY fellow Lola Matmusaeva conducted a workshop on multiculturalism involving High School students, University students and young professionals with the help of American Councils that offered their Conference Room and members of Azerbaijani Youth Development Organization who helped in organization of the event, particularly with food and activities.

The purpose of the activity was to help Azerbaijani youth to understand the importance of multiculturalism in all spheres of their lives and know the ways to treat it and approach it in today's globalized world. Also, allow the Azerbaijani young people to be exposed to different perspectives and learn from an expert about dialogue and communication in a multicultural world. This activity was organized to celebrate the UN World Interfaith Harmony Week 2017.





# MULTICULTURALISM

**AT CASPIAN BUSINESS CENTER, 2nd floor  
Conference Room at 1:30 PM, Feb 4 JOIN US!**



Dear culture lovers,  
This Saturday we have a special event where we will talk about Multiculturalism with an Australian professor, who has a tremendous experience in the field, play educational games and of course meet new friends!  
Call Aysha at +994 775 36 69 57

if you have any questions

**9) Bridging the Divides Photography Exhibition (Dhaka, BANGLADESH)**

The theme of the photography contest was based on the many different community, religious and diverse population that live together with different faiths. Through this photography contest and exhibition, we reached the heart of the people with the concept of togetherness among different faiths and diverse background. ACWAY fellow, Anupoma Troyee said that “this photography contest contributes to sharing the true diversity prevailing in our country and make us visualize the importance of harmony, peace and togetherness to make the world a better place”.

The weeklong activity took place in Dhaka, from 1<sup>st</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> February of 2017. In this week, participants from varying belief, cultural background, educational backgrounds got the opportunity to showcase the photos that focused on our diversity and togetherness. The photos collected through the online submission was sorted and judged by the renowned photographers of the country. The best three photos got awarded with crest and a certificate in the closing ceremony. The best twenty photos were printed and showcased in EMK Center for two weeks. The photography exhibition had a grand opening in presence of US Ambassador to Bangladesh, Mercia Bernicat and Dr. Kazi Nurul Islam, Founder Chairperson, Department of World Religion & Culture, Dhaka University.



Home » Shout » Event

12:00 AM, February 16, 2017 / LAST MODIFIED: 12:00 AM, February 16, 2017

## Bridging the Divides

*Observing World Interfaith Peace and Harmony Week*

### Anupoma Joyeeta Joyee

Since October 2010, the United Nations has adopted the first week of February as World Interfaith Peace and Harmony Week. Bangladesh's long fostered culture of religious harmony is under a threat now more than ever. Gen Lab, a youth organisation aims to create a platform for youth to engage in social development process of the country by acting together to bring about positive change. "Bridging the Divides - Bangladesh Peace & Harmony Week" has been Gen Lab's success story. With a view to attaining intercultural tolerance among young people coming from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds, it is a platform to speak for peace, and tolerance, at a time when their peers are being poisoned by hate speech and seduced by divisive discourse. Bridging the Divides is an award-winning project of KAICIID, Morocco grant by Anupoma Niloya Troyee who is the Bangladeshi peace ambassador of A Common Word Among the Youth.



On February 2, a cultural programme called Soul Search set the tone for the week. Bangladeshis have, since time immemorial, united to the rhythm of Sufi, Kafi, Kirtan, folk, Lalon, Marfati which convey the message of humanity and peace. Young performers from NSU and BRACU and musician Joy Shahriar offered some Sufi, Baul & Marfati, folk, classical songs while giving insights behind their lyrics, beauty of religious diversity and synchronicity of different cultures.

Following this event, an art competition among school kids on the theme of interfaith harmony was conducted the next day in We Foundation School. The aim was to sow the seeds of intercultural diversity in the young minds of children from grade 1 to 3. On February 6, US Ambassador Marcia Bernicat inaugurated the photo exhibition. The exhibition introduced 20 best photographs focusing religious coexistence and rich cultural ethnicity of Bangladesh. During the award giving ceremony, awards were handed over to the winners of essay competition as well – school-goers who demonstrated unprecedented consideration of the theme. Ratul Dev, founder of Gen Lab, said, "In surge of extreme religious violence, it is now clear that today's youth will decide the future of our country whether we brand ourselves as a secular Bangladesh believing in coexistence and harmony or a nation blind with primitive notions leading violence and terrorism."

### 10) Art Competition Among School Kids (Dhaka, BANGLADESH)

Besides the Photo Contest, ACWAY fellow, Anupoma Troyee in partnership with ‘Gen Lab’ conducted an art competition among the school kids on 3<sup>rd</sup> of February within the theme related to interfaith harmony and peace. The participating kids were from the age of 5-12. Through this art competition we tried to promote the concept of harmony & peace among diverse group of people. We gave prizes to the best three artistic drawings among the participants. We also shared these paintings among partners and supporters and youth organizations to promote the concept of peace among different faiths and cultures. Partnership was established among different art schools of Dhaka and participants got praised even though all are not winners. We believe that kids are the future backbone hence their encouragement in such social cause is important.



**Gen Lab celebrates UN Interfaith Harmony Week 2017**



After organising 'Soul Search', a musical event to celebrate interreligious relations, an art competition was held for the students of We Foundation School. The Gen Lab organised the event, 'Bangladesh Peace & Harmony Week 2017 Photo Exhibition.' It was part of UN Interfaith Harmony Week 2017 celebration. The exhibition was inaugurated on February 6 at EMK Centre and it will run until the February 20. The United nation officially observes the first week of February as interfaith harmony week in order to raise awareness on inter religious harmony. In accordance to the UN event, Gen Lab, a youth led social enterprise in Bangladesh is holding a series of event including the photo exhibition.

The Gen Lab's weekend event included a musical night, art competition, photo exhibition and essay contest. Participants from different religious, cultural and educational backgrounds got to voice their opinions and exchange knowledge about inter religious harmony. They also gained

in-depth knowledge about the way religious practices enriched our culture. They got to experience the livelihood of individuals from different religious back grounds through

photographs. In essays, they shared their ideas of establishing interfaith harmony. The photo exhibition was inaugurated by US Ambassador Marcia Bernicat. The



guest of honour was Dr. Kazi Nurul Islam, founding Chairperson, Department of World Religion and Culture, University of Dhaka. The president of Justice Chambers International Bangladesh, Ahmed Ashfaqur Rahman was also present at the event. The exhibit displays a total of 20 photographs which portrays the coexistence of different religions. The exhibition shows how such coexistence is part of South Asian historical tradition. It also displays the rich and vibrant ethnic diversity of Bangladesh.

Young photographers from different institutions expressed their ideas and stories behind their photos. They showcased century old Bangladeshi culture, yet demonstrated their present day status in our society.

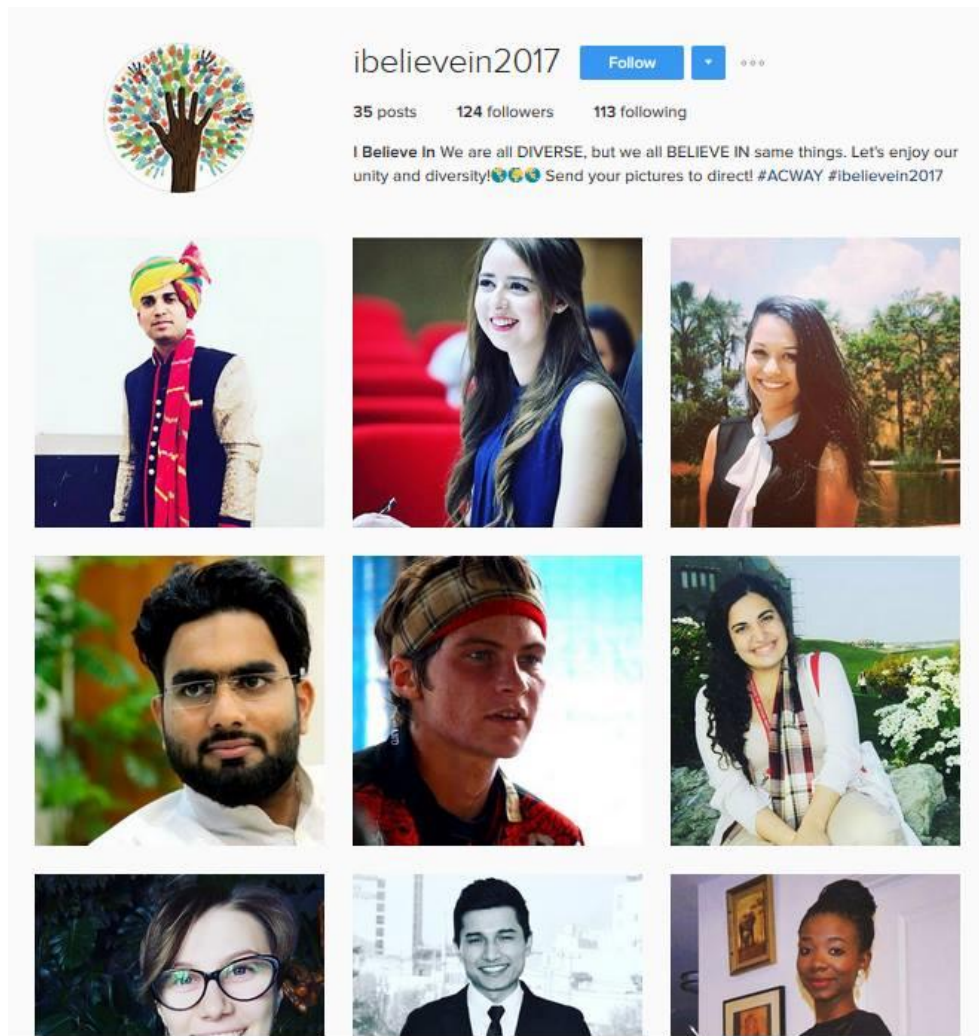
The inauguration was followed by an award ceremony. The US ambassador was not present for this segment. Dr. Kazi Nurul Islam mentioned about his lifelong activity in promoting peace, religious and cultural harmony. He emphasised that the humanity should stand stronger than any so called division or divides. The diverse nature of religion or faith made it more beautiful to live in. The founder of Gen Lab, Rafiq Dev said, 'Our country is crossing a pivotal stage in terms of youth development. In surge of extreme religious violence, it is now clear that today's youth will decide the future of our country whether we brand ourselves as a secular Bangladesh believing in coexistence and harmony or a nation blind with primitive notions leading violence and terrorism. I believe the celebration of World Interfaith Harmony Week in Bangladesh is a step forward for Bangladeshi youth towards peaceful coexistence and religious harmony.'

The winners of the essay competition were Sophia Uthi Binwa, Yasmin Khanzaker Prova and Tasnim-Ul-Islam. They were first, second and third respectively. Photo Contest Winners were Hasan Mahmud Prottoy was first, Ehsanul Siddiq Arany was second and Paris Talukder was third. \*

- Sheikh Sadaf Tasin

**11) “I BELIEVE IN” Instagram Campaign (Kazan, RUSSIA)**

Instagram campaign is for young people to share their beliefs and to show the world that youth around the world despite being extremely diverse, have “common words”. These are peace, love, friendship and family among others. This activity also meant to show the world that religious prejudices are fiction and no hatred is welcomed by 2017 youth. The campaign is led by ACWAY fellow, Liliya Khasanova from Russia, while participants are young people from all over the world, who are willing to share their ideas and promote interfaith harmony. The project started during interfaith harmony week (1-7 February). Young people share their portrait picture and statements about what they believe in and what keeps them inspired. All the pictures are posted in @ibelievein2017 account.



## 12) ACWAY Medical Camp 2017 (Islamabad, PAKISTAN)

Coming from the situation in Sidhupura, Faisalabad where the people are lack of outdoor and indoor medical treatment because of the insufficient number of doctors, nurses, and paramedic staff, ACWAY fellow, Hassan Saeed, worked together with YES Alumni Pakistan, Society of International Education, and iEARN Pakistan to ACWAY organized a day long Medical Awareness Camp on February 25<sup>th</sup> which served approximately 400 patients from Christian Colony in Sidhupura, Faisalabad. In Pakistan, there is dire need of quality public health awareness as the mothers are not aware of prevention for small diseases that result in severe issue for families, which are not well-off and cannot afford medical tests and medicines. In order to address the issue, team geared up to organize the camp that not only provided medical tests but also the medicines to the targeted beneficiaries. A team of doctors and expert along with a team of volunteers facilitated the patients with free medical check-ups and medicines. The project nourished the ties between Muslim and Christian community and cleared misconceptions.





**13) Promoting Interfaith Harmony through Cleanliness Drive (Faisalabad, PAKISTAN)**

Continuing the Medical Campaign the day before, ACWAY fellow, Hassan Saeed carried out a cleanliness drive to promote interfaith harmony at F-6 Christian Colony on February 26<sup>th</sup> and educated regarding ways in which diseases can be avoided during winters. The reason why this activity was focused on Christian community was Christian communities are marginalized and not given any importance in mainstream education and extracurricular activities which leads to a sense of exclusion. The activities included collecting trash, disposing them, installing trash cans and educating the participants regarding keeping their surroundings clean. The team also explained the importance of cleanliness to avoid elements of diseases at school and home. They also learned about ways in which hand-washing is done successfully. Overall, the day focused on highlighting healthy patterns for the better. A total of 60 residents and 10 volunteers participated in the project.





**14) Faith in Tune : Tu' Bishvat Interculturelle Feier (Berlin, GERMANY)**

Project "An Interfaith Celebration of Tu' Bishvat" (Jewish Holiday for Trees and Nature) is a multicultural project that was being conducted in Berlin, Germany with Minor Refugees and Youth from the Jewish High School, accompanied by a Rabbi and an Imam in Berlin, Germany by ACWAY Fellow Anja Fahlenkamp.

**10 FEBRUAR 2017**  
**TU'BISHVAT**  
**INTERKULTURELLE FEIER**

Im Rahmen der UN World Interfaith Harmony Week laden wir am 10. Februar 2017 zu einer interkulturellen Tu'Bishvat-Feier in Berlin Charlottenburg ein!

Am Abend des 10. Februar 2017 beginnt der jüdische Feiertag Tu'Bishvat, zu dem man traditionell den Beginn des Frühlings feiert, sich an der Natur erfreut und Bäume pflanzt. Unter dem Motto „Celebrating Diversity“ wollen wir diesen Feiertag und seinen allgemeingültigen Appell an unser Umweltbewusstsein in interkultureller, interreligiöser Runde feiern. Dazu bringt der Verein RAA Berlin Jugendliche der Jüdischen Oberschule Berlin und Unbegleitete Minderjährige Flüchtlinge aus einer Berliner Unterkunft im Rahmen seines Austauschprojekts zusammen, um gemeinsam zu pflanzen, backen und essen.

Im Anschluss folgt eine offene, interreligiöse Feier – organisiert durch die Initiative *Faiths in Tune*, die auch hinter dem Berliner Festival der Religionen steht – mit mitreißender Live-Musik von dem begnadeten Geigenvirtuosen Alexey „Aletchko“ Kochetkov, zu der die gesamte Nachbarschaft herzlich eingeladen ist.

Das *interkulturelle Stadtteilzentrum DIVAN* in Berlin Charlottenburg stellt uns freundlicherweise seine Räumlichkeiten für die Feier zur Verfügung.

**AB 16:00 UHR**  
RAA BERLIN  
JUGENDAUSTAUSCH-PROGRAMM (NUR FÜR REGISTRIERTE TEILNEHMER)  
Wir pflanzen, backen und essen gemeinsam!

**AB 18:00 UHR**  
TU'BISHVAT FEIER (OFFEN UND KOSTENLOS FÜR ALLE)  
Mit Live-Musik von Geigenvirtuose Alexey „Aletchko“ Kochetkov

Tu'Bishvat  
interkulturelle Feier  
Freitag, 10. Februar 2017  
Interkulturelles Stadtteilzentrum Divan  
Nehringstr. 8  
14059 Berlin  
Kontakt:  
Anja Fahlenkamp  
(RAA Berlin / Faiths in Tune)  
[anjafahlenkamp@raa.de](mailto:anjafahlenkamp@raa.de)

Die Feier wird präsentiert von:

*Faiths in Tune*

RAA BERLIN

In Kooperation mit:

DIVAN | interkulturelles Stadtteilzentrum  
FORUMDIALOG  
GEMEINSAM WIRTSCHAFTLICH PARTNER DER VEREINE  
**ACWAY**  
A Common Word Among the Youth

**15) Embracing Intercultural Diversity for Peaceful Election in Kenya**

Heading to election in Kenya by August 2017, the media has been covered by hate speech, tribal grouping and less encouraging spirit to bring together everyone, rather to divide them. Our ACWAY fellow, Zachariah Munayi and his volunteer groups conducted activity called Diversity in Action by interviewing people from different tribe in Kenya to talk about each other's existence and to send the message of peace to everyone. The record of this interview is compiled and uploaded in ACWAY Project Fan Page.



## TESTIMONIALS:

### **The Rev. Canon Charles P. Gibbs (USA)**

"Of the many possible futures facing the Earth community in this time of enormous challenge, I embrace **the inclusive, open, resilient, responsible** future this new generation of leaders, who are ACWAY fellows, are creating through their **inspiring visions and consequential actions.**"

### **Dr Brian J. Adams (Australia)**

Director for Centre for Interfaith & Cultural Dialogue, Griffith University and  
Convenor of the G20 Interfaith Summit

**"ACWAY has struck the right chord with youth from around the world. ACWAY has turned the traditional approach on its head. Instead of trying to fit youth into traditional interfaith work, ACWAY has found a way to fit interfaith work into the pursuits and passions of the youth, unleashing impressive energy, innovation and potential"**.

### **Dr Abbas Pannakal (India)**

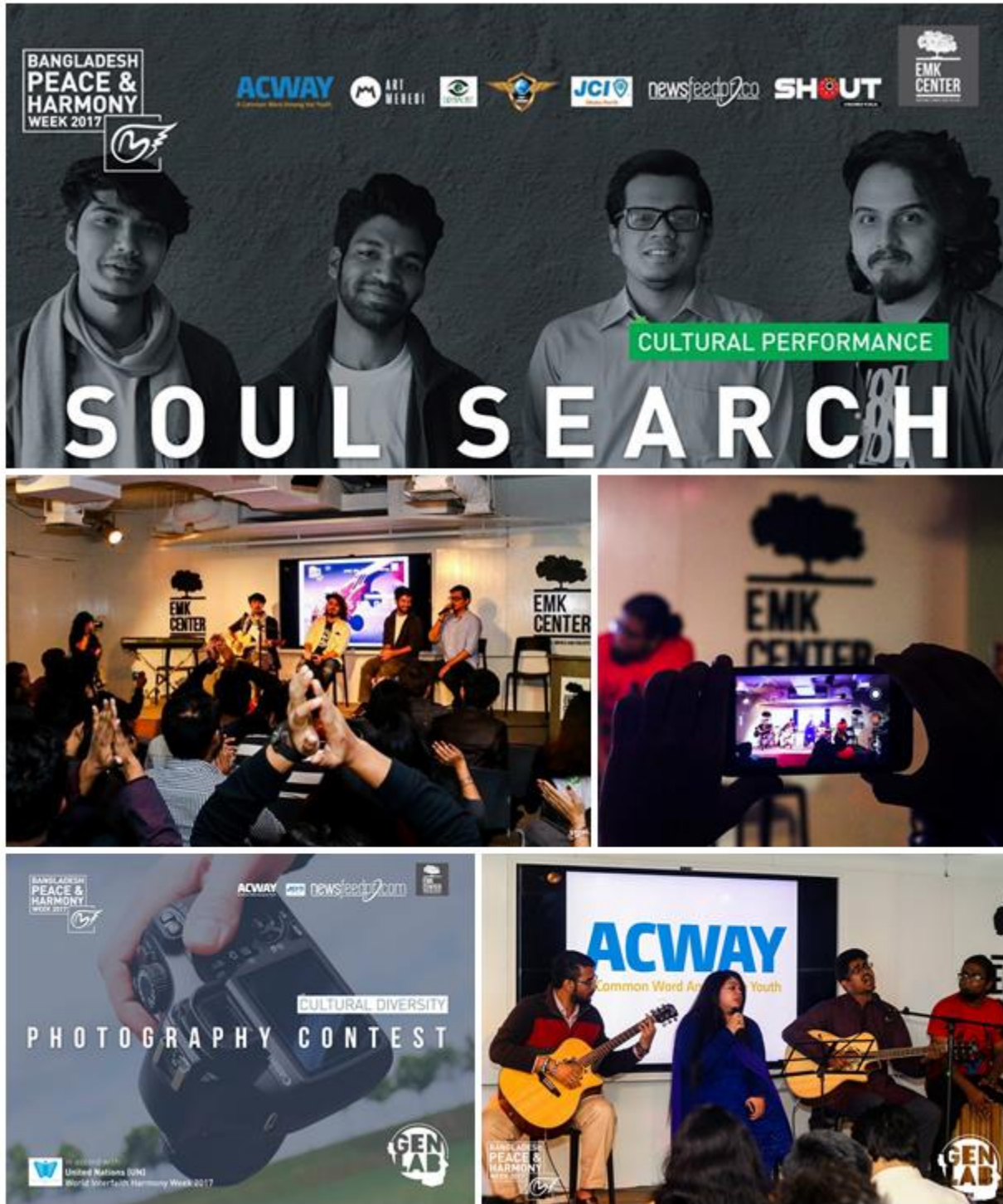
Director, International Interfaith Initiative

"I am so happy to say that ACWAY is the best Youth Project, introduced in the year 2015, to promote Interfaith Harmony.

It has delivered sessions at the Parliament of World Religions in Salt Lake City, at G20 Interfaith Summit in Turkey, at Interfaith Harmony Day in Dubai and International Interfaith Harmony Seminar in Malaysia.

**THANK YOU TO ALL ACWAY FELLOWS, VOLUNTEERS AND  
PARTNERS FOR MAKING THIS HAPPEN  
AND THE ACTION CONTINUES...**

## Miscellaneous pictures and screen shots





**best project wins**  
**\$25,000**

**ACWAY**  
A Common Word Among the Youth

**A Common Word Among the Youth**  
Published by Shariful Islam [?] · Page Liked · 10 January · €

Do you have an event or initiative planned for the World Interfaith Harmony Week? Register it for the possibility of winning \$25,000 cash prize and a gold medal. Find more details in the first comment.

#ACWAY #WIHW #DIVERSITY

Tag photo Add location Edit

Like Comment Share

13 · Top comments

1 share · 1 comment

**A Common Word Among the Youth** More details:  
[http://www.worldinterfaithharmonyweek.com/\\_/WIHW-2017...](http://www.worldinterfaithharmonyweek.com/_/WIHW-2017...)

**Gift of Love** The 2017 WIHW is Coming  
WORLDINTERFAITHHARMON...

Write a comment...

**#HUMANSOfTHEWorld**  
Take photo with a friend from a different faith or culture and post it with the hashtag #HumansOfTheWorld

**ACWAY**  
A Common Word Among the Youth

**A Common Word Among the Youth**  
Published by Shariful Islam [?] · Like This Page · 29 January · €

As part of the Diversity Project for the World Interfaith Harmony Week 2017, ACWAY invites you all to take part in the "HumansOfTheWorld" campaign!

Simply take photo with a friend from a different faith or culture and post it on Facebook with the hashtag #HumansOfTheWorld

#ACWAY #WIHW #Diversity

Tag photo Add location Edit

Like Comment Share

FA Eerina, Raquel Bennet and 12 others

17 shares

Write a comment...



## ACWAY World Map



## WHERE TO FIND US

Website: [www.acway.org](http://www.acway.org)

Facebook Page: [www.facebook.com/ACWAYProject](http://www.facebook.com/ACWAYProject)

## FOR FURTHER ENQUIRIES:

Primary contact person: [rawaad@acway.org](mailto:rawaad@acway.org)

Monitoring & evaluation: [azizah@acway.org](mailto:azizah@acway.org)

General: [info@acway.org](mailto:info@acway.org)

ACWAY Chair

*Rawaad Mahyub*

Rawaad Mahyub