

**Organization:** Ethiopia Interfaith Forum for Development Dialogue and Action (EIFDDA)

**Country:** Ethiopia

**Event Dates:** February 3rd and 4th, 2023

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## Preamble

This year, during the WIFH week, Ethiopia Interfaith Forum for Development Dialogue and Action (EIFDDA) in collaboration with other Faith Based Organizations (FBOs) has hosted to programs as part of commemorating “WORLD INTERFAITH HARMONY WEEK (WIHW)” to highlight the importance of interfaith cooperation, and its role in conflict prevention and Peacebuilding.

### 1- “Interreligious Peace and Harmony Dialogue”

Ethiopia has been facing various challenges including **intra-religious** intolerance which is leading to increased instances of violent confrontation. There is an increase in **inter-religious** violence in areas across the country including violence targeting the construction of specific places of worship or during religious celebrations and there is also limited interaction between different faith group’s that fuels mistrust and other many problems. As part of ongoing program through the Joint Initiative for Strategic Religious Aciont (JISRA), **On February 3rd, 2023**, a one day “Interreligious Peace and Harmony Dialogue” undertaken for observing #WorldInterfaithHarmonyWeek in West Shewa Zone of Oromia Region, Ethiopia.



Figure 1-Opening Prayer by Faith Leaders and traditional leaders

The theme of the event was “Strengthening Interfaith Harmony and Collaborator to find Solutions for Challenges related to Freedom of Religion and Belief (FoRB) and Interfaith relationship”. Over 40 faith and traditional belief leaders including Orthodox, Muslim, Protestant, Catholic as well as traditional leaders (Aba Gedas) have been attended and sensitized on #WIHW, FoRB and Social Cohesion for fostering understanding and cooperation between different religious / cultural /ethnic groups.



*Figure 2-Open and Intensive Discussions among faith groups*

Following Intensive Dialogue, participants vowed to work together in Harmony for resolving community conflicts and in building sustainable peace in their localities. The event was instrumental for assessing interfaith relationships and identifying issues among the community, and device local solutions working together with mutual respect for promoting FoRB and Interfaith Relationship among the divided communities



**Figure 3- Sensitization on Social Cohesion: Bridging, Bonding, Building**



“Not only tolerance and understanding among ourselves, but we have to work in Harmony for having peaceful community and country” A religious leader speaks during the event



By doing so, religious leaders has established an Interfaith Advocacy Network Group as local system which will further helping pepole connect across religious communities and within.

## 2- “Interfaith Youth Peace Conference”

On February 4th 2023, over 500 faith and non-faith youths were gathered to commemorate #WorldInterfaithHarmonyWeek, at DebreZeit City, Ethiopia. Awareness about the #wihw, Freedom of Religion and Belief (#Forb4All), and discussions were undertaken for fostering harmony and building positive relationships among youth. The event was instrumental for cultivating Youth Champions who will play a lead role in championing positive Interfaith Relationship,



building peace and promoting Freedom of Religion and Belief (FoRB) within their own faith as well as non-faith communities.



Around the world, many young people are victims of religious, cultural, direct and structural violence, and can sometimes become carriers of that violence or perpetrators. However, despite a strong tendency among politicians and policymakers to position youth engagement within the victim-

perpetrator binary, we are working for meaningful youth inclusion by asserting their roles as peacebuilders, intentionally working to promote a culture of peace in their respective localities. Interfaith Youths, who came from various faith local structures and also from Schools, were capacitated on various topics including awareness on WIHW, FoRB and Inclusion. Youth panelists present papers on the role of religion on peacebuilding and using interfaith youths as peacebuilders in their communities through collaboration.



Agreement was reached to establish Peace Clubs in various schools and faith structures found at grassroots for sustained youth dialogue and capacity building initiatives.

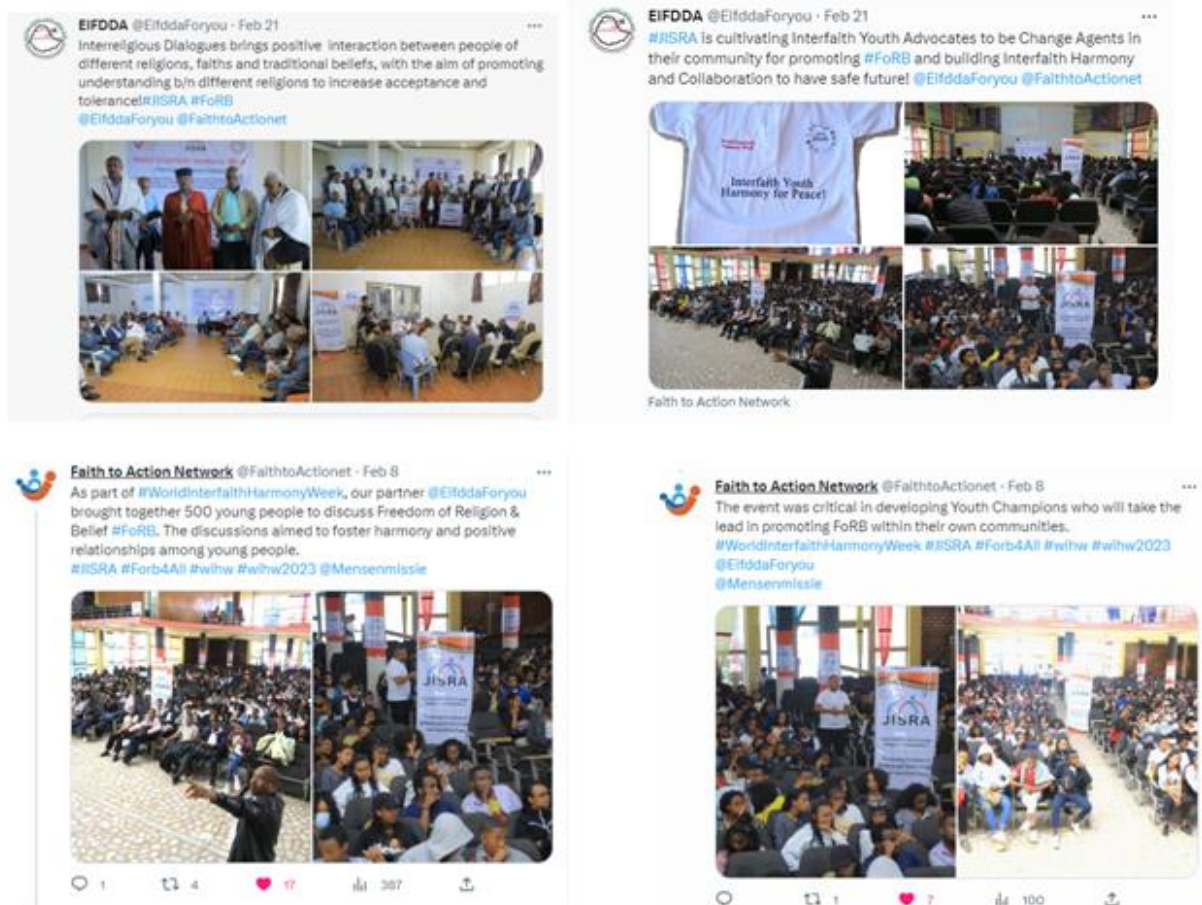


Figure 4- Social Media Coverage both internal and external links

Using Twitter, both EIFDDA and partner from Kenya –Faith to Action Network has given social media visibility of the event which has gained positive comments from internal as well as external audiences.