



KAICIID DIALOGUE CENTRE

WEBINAR



## Best Practices

in Implementing  
Grassroots  
Interfaith and  
Intercultural  
Activities in Local  
Communities

Monday, 27 February 2023

@ 3pm CET



KAICIID DIALOGUE CENTRE

# Report for World Interfaith Harmony Week

*Submitted by Focal Point at KAICIID International Dialogue Centre:*

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## CONTEXT AND AIM OF THE WEBINAR

In celebration of the World Interfaith Harmony Week, during which grassroots organisers throughout the world host and promote their events to foster tolerance and acceptance across religions and cultures, the International Dialogue Centre KAICIID brought together a panel of grassroots activists from around the globe to share experiences in implementing their activities and initiatives. Under the webinar title “*Best Practices in Implementing Grassroots Interfaith and Intercultural Activities in Local Communities*” panellists discussed why they use the approaches they do, and the challenges they have faced and overcome.

A diverse panel of seven speakers in a moderated conversation took the audience on an interfaith and intercultural journey across continents, travelling from Nigeria to Indonesia, to Portugal and Serbia, across to Guatemala and over to Myanmar. The webinar lasted 1 hour and 45 minutes and was attended by 20 participants coming from Egypt, France, Greece, Hungary, Indonesia, Iraq, Kenya, Lebanon, Nepal, Nigeria, Poland and Portugal. Moderated by Reverend Mike Waltner, Senior Programme Manager of KAICIID’s Asia Region, the webinar commenced with an introductory note by Aleksandra Djurić Milovanović, Coordinator of the Network for Dialogue at KAICIID’s European Programme. The audience was encouraged to join the conversation through the chat and “word cloud” polls.

Hosted on Monday, 27 February 2023, the main aim of the webinar and its recording (made available over the KAICIID YouTube channel) was to provide a tool to support and motivate people to adopt good practices into their own initiatives. For instance, it investigated factors to consider when deciding on an appropriate project or activity; how to motivate members of a community to join an activity; important considerations for making Interfaith and intercultural engagements sustainable, and the benefits that interfaith and intercultural activities bring to local communities.

## LEARNINGS AND MESSAGES FROM THE SPEAKERS

### The Initiatives

Highlighting contributions that grassroots interfaith and intercultural activities offer to making more inclusive, resilient and cohesive societies, a spotlight was shone on the various initiatives the panellists lead:

- From Indonesia, interfaith and peacebuilding projects and workshops organised and led by women from diverse backgrounds and religions. The projects aim to empower women and build their skills in interfaith and intercultural activities.  
***Wiwin Siti Aminah Rohmawati, Srikandi Lintas Iman, KAICIID Fellow***
- From Nigeria, experiencing ethno-religious conflicts in the Kaduna State led to finding ways to reconcile. Various activities were conducted to help the conflicted groups in communities to work together and achieve reconciliation.  
***Pastor Yohanna Buru, Peace, Revival and Reconciliation Foundation***

- From Iraq, the initiative focused on bringing youth together to counter the sectarian conflict and violence which was threatening the unity and harmony in the area. Activities included visiting each other's religious community festivities and holidays.  
***Shireen Wahab, Kurdistan Relief Association***
- From Portugal and Serbia, the activity was the sharing of six life stories of local refugees and migrants which were put into writing. From this, a book was published as a toolkit with questions and reflection guidelines, which can be used to help people and host communities in welcoming someone new to the community.  
***Isabel Tootill, MEERU | Abrir Caminho and Maja Markovic, ADRA Serbia***
- From Guatemala, a project to help religions support community development. Starting with mainly Christians, the religious diversity of the project has been increasing. A focus of the project is the capacity building of youth in interreligious and intercultural dialogue. This is done through workshops with 16 – 18-year-olds in cities and visiting other places of worship.  
***Ana Victoria Peláez, Social Researcher on gender, migration and social inclusion. KAICIID Fellow***
- From Myanmar, initiatives were started to raise awareness and counter hate speech in social media by showing and telling stories from people coming from other religious communities.  
***Harry Myo Lin, AICIID Programme officer for Asia Region***

#### Challenges, successes and Lessons Learnt

- To understand complex minorities with different identities we need to start from the bottom up.
- Grassroots projects can also be used for policy-making changes and can motivate people and organizations to develop further projects and enhance grassroots activism.
- The power of storytelling:
  - Stories have the power to change mindsets and communities, they humanize the numbers.
  - Showing stories from minorities will help the majority to relate to them.
- Where there is the challenge to involve religious men - as they have the power in society - choosing to involve them was the first step to sustaining the project and making an impact. The sustainability of the cooperation was the biggest challenge.
- There is the challenge of changing negative discourse and finally changing the narrative.

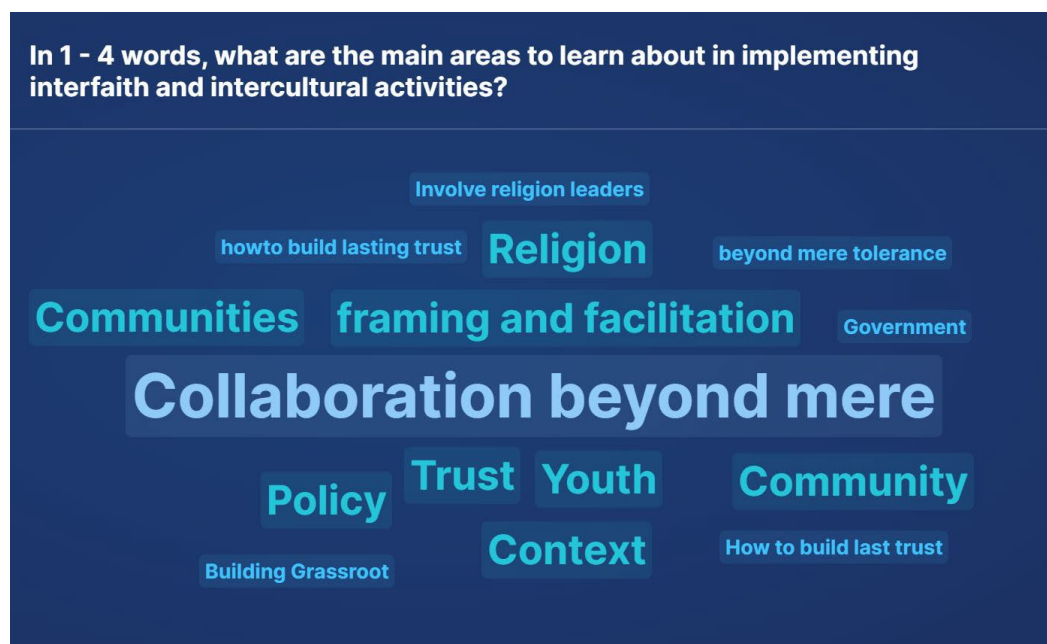
## Outcomes and Sustainability

An overriding echo from the speakers for sustainability is youth: the capacity-building of young people, letting youth participate and involving the new generations in initiatives and projects. As well, a major aspect of sustainability is to build trust:

- Creative Community Engagement: interfaith projects need an active community. Examples of creative engagement are creating space for farmers of different faiths to share information on crop-growing, or organizing football tournaments with people from different religions in the same team and for them to devise strategies to win the game. Such activities make for trust between the individuals and towards the entity or group devising the interfaith projects.
- Strategic Financial Management: there must be trust in how resources are allocated, and transparency needs to be maintained with a long-term funding strategy.
- Developing a network:
  - Engage individuals who can invest time to implement the initiatives or projects, and train implementing people so that they share the values of the initiative, project or organization.
  - Consider policy influencing work: how the initiative can bring about larger changes in society, thus creating a culture of peace and non-violence.

## **AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION**

The audience was encouraged to engage with panellists and the moderator through the webinar chat and the Q&A. For each topic of the discussion panel, the audience was also asked for their opinion or perceptions. These were collected as the webinar went along in “word clouds” as follows:



In 1 - 3 words, what challenges have you faced?

Having people come together  
Religion Man  
Funding only reach liberal groups Naturality of convenience  
**Motivating people**  
Male domination neutrality of convenors Intimidation  
Growing extremism Patriarchy Ingrained prejudice

What is a key factor for the sustainability of interfaith or intercultural engagement?

Common activities  
Develop cadre  
The last Crisis Creating safe space  
Intimidation value Network  
Voluntarily  
Regular engagement  
Afraid from repeating cri

The webinar concluded at 16:45 CET.

The recording of the webinar is available on [KAICIID's YouTube Channel](#), and via [the webinar page](#).