

The International Dialogue Centre



**KAICIID International Fellows Programme**

Yearbook 2015



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This Yearbook will introduce people, who, at first glance, appear to have very little in common: gender, geography, religion, language and culture all seem to make them different from each other. Women and men from 16 different countries, from almost every continent, followers of five different religions, it may seem that the only thing they have in common is their graduation as members of the inaugural class of KAICIID's International Fellows Programme.

While much may seem to make them different from each other, the KAICIID Fellows are united by something far more fundamental: a shared vision of a cooperative world where religious dignity and respect for difference overcomes hatred, intolerance and violence.

This is a vision that also drives our work at KAICIID, and we are inspired and driven by the unique, irreplaceable and valuable role that leaders of religious communities can and do play in fostering peaceful communities and cohesive societies. It is our belief that religious leaders can remain devoted to their own traditions, while at the same time encouraging their communities to respect differences and to reach out to one another to address shared values and concerns that matter to us all.

In a world where religion is increasingly manipulated to justify violence and wrongdoing, religious leaders' role and influence to encourage respect, understanding and cooperation is urgently needed.

The KAICIID Fellows Programme is our contribution in mentoring the next generation of religious leaders: a generation that we hope will be equipped with the skills to engage in interreligious dialogue, and to translate the benefits of transformative dialogue into concrete change for their communities.

We hope that the KAICIID Fellows are the ambassadors, multipliers and mentors of the dialogue who will shape a peaceful future by using and advocating for dialogue.

Each Fellow is part of a unique peer group we call the KAICIID family, a diverse and accepting community defined by their commitment to positive change.

The 2015 KAICIID Fellows serve as the foundation of a rapidly expanding global interreligious community of peacebuilders. In this book you will find many examples of transformative friendships and partnerships that have blossomed as a result of this programme.

We hope that you find these stories as inspiring as we do, and that they give you, as they do us, the hope and faith in interreligious dialogue that we need to continue our work in these challenging times.

KAICIID Secretary General  
Faisal Bin Muaammar

## ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL DIALOGUE CENTRE

The International Dialogue Centre (KAICIID) is an international organisation with the mission of promoting dialogue to help people to understand and respect different religions and cultures.

The Centre works to counteract discrimination and resolve conflict. It is the first intergovernmental organisation that teams up policymakers and religious representatives to encourage dialogue between people who may never meet or enjoy mutual trust, and to talk through their problems, especially if there is a cultural or religious issue at stake.

The governing Board of Directors comprises representatives of five major religions representing about 80% of the world's believers and thus offers the international community a unique asset.

Through its networks, the Centre has access to religious communities around the world. Combined

with the support of the member governments, the Centre can convene influential stakeholders who usually never meet or collaborate, yet have many goals and methods in common. This collaboration between religious and secular leadership can create new, more inclusive solutions.

The Centre is inclusive of all religions, yet not bound to any single faith or denomination.

Through dialogue, the Centre helps communities to create peace and to build harmonious societies. To achieve this, the Centre fosters cooperation between diverse religious communities to close the divisions created by the manipulation of religion to engender fear and hatred.

Our vision is a world in which there is respect, understanding and cooperation among people; justice, peace and reconciliation; and an end to the abuse of religion to justify repression, violence and conflict.

## OUR ROLES

**We help create the platforms, knowledge, and commitment that foster interreligious dialogue (IRD) in conflict areas.**

**We support international and national institutions in using IRD to work for positive change.**

**We convene religious leaders, policymakers and other stakeholders to engage in IRD.**

**We create and disseminate knowledge on IRD to help achieve peace and reconciliation.**

## WHAT WE DO

We promote IRD to help find sustainable solutions to contemporary challenges and conflict situations, working in three priority areas:

- Applying IRD for peace and reconciliation in four designated conflict situations: the Central African Republic, Iraq/Syria, Nigeria, and Myanmar
- Capacity building efforts, which aim to empower religious leaders to become active peacemakers in communities experiencing conflict and division
- Working to advocate on behalf of IRD with international organisations, policymakers and other stakeholders.



KAICIID is the only intergovernmental organization with a Board of Directors made up of representatives from major world religions: Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism / Photo: KAICIID



The International Dialogue Centre is based in Vienna and was established by Austria, Saudi Arabia and Spain. The Holy See is the Founding Observer / Photo: KAICIID



## ENVISIONING A WORLD AT PEACE: THE KAICIID INTERNATIONAL FELLOWS PROGRAMME

The most intractable of world problems require change.

Hard work, dedication and good will carry a project only so far. Changing people's attitudes towards others, while also bridging religious and cultural divides, requires skill and support, too. The effort mandates a strong vision of a diverse world of people at peace.

KAICIID envisions such a world; one in which people of faith acknowledge each other and promote respect for all humanity by engaging in reconciliation, peacebuilding, and creative coexistence. With a mission that includes enabling interreligious and intercultural dialogue, KAICIID has developed core programmes to carry out its vision.

One such core project is the KAICIID International Fellows Programme (KIFP). This visionary effort, which was inaugurated in 2015, brings together people from major world religions and nearly every continent, to build a spirit of understanding and cooperation. Its ultimate aim is to empower an effective network of peacebuilders who understand religion's necessary, but complicated, role in such work.

At its heart, the KIFP seeks to expand opportunities for dialogue among young religious leaders, by giving teachers at religious institutions the knowledge, tools, experience, and networks to model and teach themselves. With KAICIID's support, the 2015 Fellows implemented workshops and activities of their own, teaching students to become IRD facilitators and leaders in their own right.

The KIFP initiative was envisioned as a balm for wounds caused by conflict.

Although religious diversity is growing globally and peacebuilding has never been more necessary, few schools training religious leaders include

courses in interreligious dialogue (IRD) or content about diverse faiths. Only rarely do young religious leaders in one region of the world interact with those from another. Lack of diversity in religious institutions regionally, lack of interest, or lack of resources contribute to this educational void. In evaluating the programme's needs, the KIFP found that at least half of the Fellows' institutional affiliations had no existing IRD work or had significant challenges in implementing it.

This yearbook tells the story of the KIFP's inaugural year and the individuals who gave it life, 20 men and women who gathered for diverse trainings and practical discussions, who shared experiences to hone their skills and knowledge, so projects that began as dreams could become realities. As one cohort, the Fellows came from four continents and five major world religions. Although some of the Fellows reside in communities in which diverse religions coexist peacefully, many of them have witnessed tragedies wrought by religious extremism and divisiveness.

The KIFP selected teachers at religious institutions who pledged to educate others about IRD, about how to facilitate and lead IRD, and about how to transform conflict toward peace. Although all the Fellows had backgrounds that included experience, knowledge and enthusiasm for IRD, their shared conversations and trainings enriched the KIFP - beyond the sum of their isolated work.

The Fellows committed to the one-year programme and first attended trainings taught by KAICIID experts at its Vienna, Austria, headquarters. This gathering was to orient the Fellows, and it allowed them to practice diverse dialogue strategies, build community among Fellows, and attend field trips that broadened opportunities for IRD. The richly diverse trainings centered on the precise skills the Fellows said they needed most: facilitation, communication, presentation, leadership, problem-solving, outreach, peacebuilding, conflict transformation, and evaluation, among others.

Building upon the first in-person gathering, the group also met together in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, to design and plan short-term local, regional, and international courses or events at their local institutions. Here, the practical lessons of the trainings were put into practice, with grants to support the individual initiatives.

Because monitoring, evaluation and sustainability are necessary, both for measuring the impact of the KIFP and finding future funding partners, the Fellows spent time learning best practices for tracking and reporting their work. This component also required Fellows to design sustainable models, based on the lessons learned throughout their fellowship.

A final Vienna-based gathering at the end of the fellowship allowed for thorough feedback and assessment. The 2015 Fellows also welcomed a new cohort of fellowship recipients.

As a direct result of the programme, the Fellows noted that they better understood the transformative nature of IRD and what authentic interreligious collaboration means. They lauded their entry into a large network of IRD practitioners and welcomed

learning about why IRD is as vital for peacebuilding as other types of strategies toward peaceful co-existence, such as ethnicity-based reconciliation.

The very act of being together as people of diverse faiths allowed the Fellows to increase their knowledge of the five major world religions represented amongst them. As they learned about the religions, they also learned about the unique contextual challenges to dialogue and peace from region to region.

IRD takes persistence. Challenges can arise from every aspect. Grassroots efforts are often understaffed. Finding money and enthusiastic individuals to sustain efforts requires the most fleeting of resources — time — as well as money to enable positive experiences.

The KIFP helped today's emerging leaders in IRD better understand the challenges. More importantly, it fortified them for the important work of training new generations of leaders.

As the Fellows bonded with one another with a shared vision of peace amidst diversity, their hearts, and ours, embrace hope.



In 2015, Fellows from 16 countries, now part of the KAICIID Fellows Network, were trained in dialogue, mediation and peacebuilding / Photo: KAICIID

## KAICIID International Fellows Programme

The KIFP is a one-year learning and training programme that empowers institutions that train future religious leaders by providing capacity-building to select teachers. Its curriculum is designed, developed and delivered by KAICIID staff. In 2015, its inaugural year, the 20 Fellows came from 16 different countries, four continents, five religions, 14 academic institutions and eight religious and interreligious centres.



### RELIGIOUS DENOMINATION

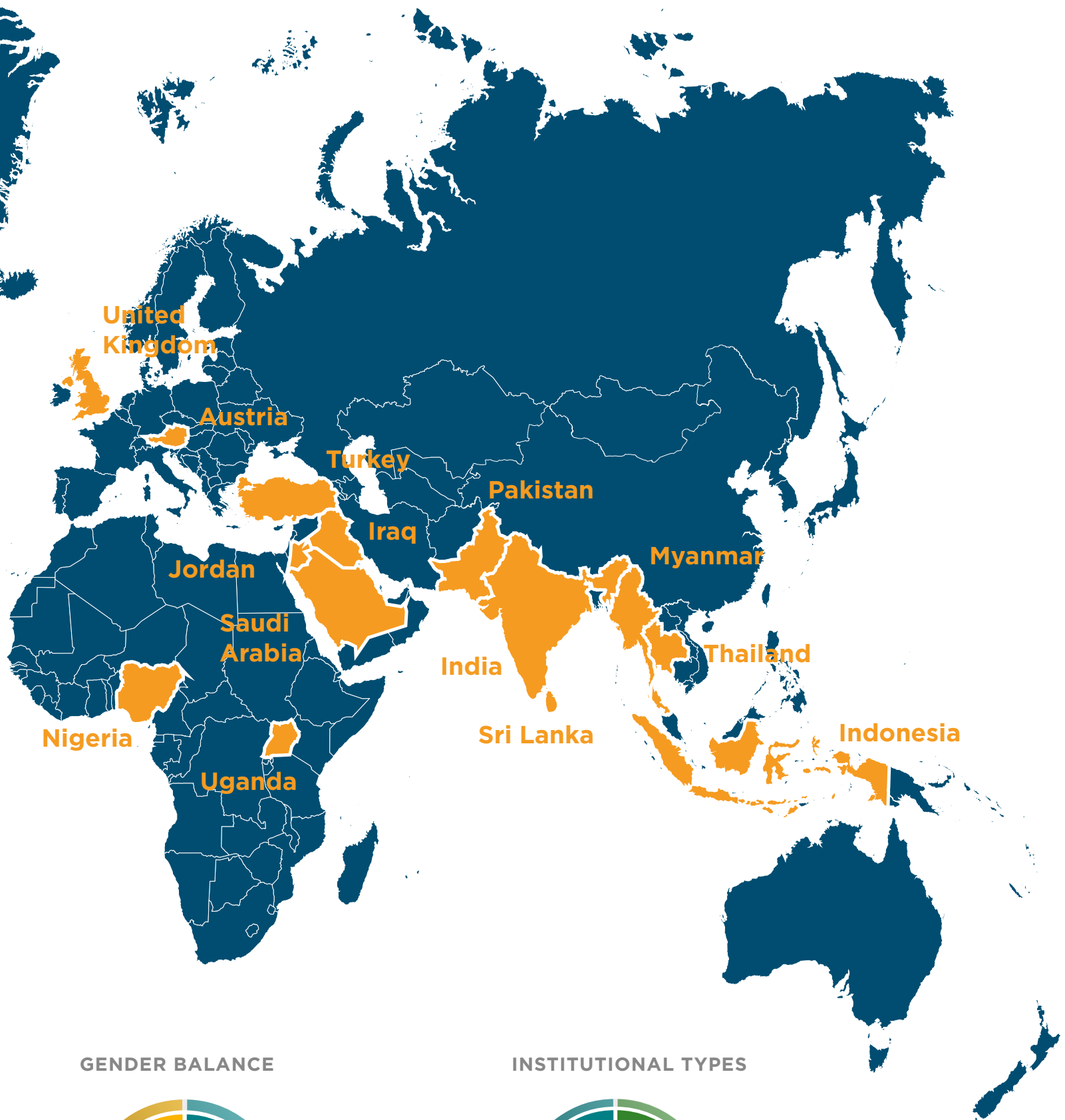


- 55% Muslim
- 25% Christian
- 10% Buddhist
- 5% Hindu
- 5% Jewish

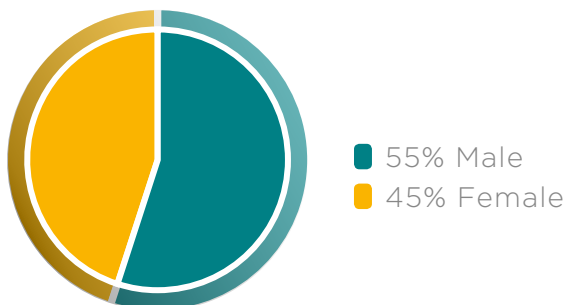
### GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION



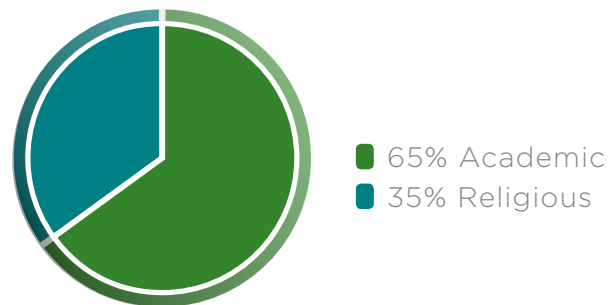
- 60% Asia
- 15% Africa
- 15% Americas
- 10% Europe



GENDER BALANCE



INSTITUTIONAL TYPES



## EXPANDING BOTH HEARTS AND MINDS THROUGH TRANSFORMATIVE RELATIONSHIPS: THE KAICIID FELLOWS NETWORK



The Fellows Network encompasses more than 20 countries and more than 60 interreligious practitioners and scholars from world religions / Photo: KAICIID

As the 2015 KAICIID International Fellows Programme came to a close, participants were united in naming the most transformative component of their trainings: the opportunity for safe and sincere dialogue with diverse people of faith.

For KAICIID, a key question was how to bolster the newly formed Network beyond its year-long incubation into a lasting exchange. To answer the question, KAICIID turned to the Fellows themselves to determine what their needs were and to explore the challenges of creating a lasting Network of interreligious dialogue (IRD) leaders.

In consultation with the Fellows, the Centre learned that they required access to continuous education, peer support and a way to connect a rapidly growing and diverse group of educators committed to interreligious dialogue for peace and reconciliation. Although Facebook and Twitter are used by nearly three-quarters of the most recent Fellows, such networks are unable to provide robust, easily accessible databases, project development resources, or training. The Fellows also sought opportunities to expand

their influence and the reach of their work in resolving interreligious conflict. To meet these needs, KAICIID recognised that the Network needed an offline and an online component.

The Network will connect primarily through the KAICIID Fellows Online Platform, while offline actions such as mission trips, educational conferences on IRD and professional development courses for members will also be offered.

The Platform will facilitate in person Network activities and will also be a space for further training. For instance, the Fellows 2015 are the first group of participants of KAICIID's online course on interreligious dialogue, featuring global experts from universities in Canada, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States.

As the online hub develops, Fellows are already contributing to the promise of such a network. Among other things, it can track the progress of their projects, nurture strategies for funding interreligious dialogue work, and provide a supportive climate for shared learning and personal growth. As the Fellows Programme

grows, new voices and energies will widen the Network's reach among like-minded people seeking a diverse and peaceful world.

Through the Network activities, a shared identity will be established over the coming years. Friendships and professional relationships forged in person will be maintained and grown. Educators and new leaders emerging from the trainings will meet their counterparts in other parts of the world —online. The conversations and sharing necessary to build trusted relationships working toward the common good require listening to and being heard by people from many world views and faiths.

The Network will also serve as a critical resource to the Fellows themselves and their affiliated religious schools and universities and their students, who will benefit from engaging stories, data, research and models, produce ready-made case studies and content easily integrated into university student coursework.

The Network serves to do what is at the heart of all of KAICIID's work: the hard work of relationship building. As one participant noted, "It is through these relationships that I have grown in my understanding of myself, my friends, and the religions they are living in their every day."



With the support of Rev. Mike Waltner, KAICIID Fellows Programme Manager, the Fellows discussed possibilities for the Network in March 2016 / Photo: KAICIID



Shahram Nahidi, Programme Manager E-Learning and Virtual Platforms, was one of the trainers and has developed the KAICIID online course / Photo: KAICIID



The Network will be connected through an online platform, but the Fellows are also expected to meet at different activities / Photo: KAICIID

## FIRST TRAINING: INTRODUCING FELLOWS TO KAICIID AND IRD

**T**wenty strangers from sixteen countries representing five religious backgrounds shared little more than a commitment to interreligious peace when they first met in Vienna in February 2015. After a week of shared meals and intense dialogue, KAICIID's inaugural class of International Fellows returned home as colleagues and friends.

“When I first met the other Fellows, I was intimidated and felt like a novice,” said Ven. Mandalar Lankara, a Buddhist monk from Myanmar whose first trip to Vienna was also his first journey abroad. “After a few sessions, the Fellows felt like brothers and sisters. KAICIID helped us respect each other and work together to find peace.”

The first training week at KAICIID headquarters was designed to enhance the Fellows' knowledge of IRD theory and advance their ability to practice effective conflict resolution. Each session and site visit empowered this new cohort of

IRD leaders, trainers and advocates to enact positive change in their home communities. Capacity building sessions throughout the week focused on different dimensions of interreligious understanding, combining theoretical and applied work with concrete simulations. Fellows and KAICIID's expert trainers discussed how to make dialogue applicable to various stakeholders, how to bring different groups together through IRD, and how to convince policymakers of dialogue's valuable role in the peacebuilding process. They also exchanged personal and often difficult

stories relevant to IRD principles.

“They shared their experience of people being killed due to the lack of interreligious dialogue. This was a wake up for me that we might one

day save some lives through this knowledge and engaging in IRD,” said one Fellow.

Classroom sessions covered IRD history, methods and philosophies. Fellows were trained how to overcome challenges when teaching and

**“Classroom sessions covered IRD history, methods and philosophies. Fellows were trained how to overcome challenges when teaching and facilitating dialogue and were taught best practices for using social media and e-learning to promote peacebuilding.”**



The first training week took place at the Centre's headquarters in February 2015 / Photo: KAICIID

facilitating dialogue and were taught best practices for using social media and e-learning to promote peacebuilding. In the process, they identified empathy, open-mindedness and honesty as crucial for creating safe dialogue spaces.

On the final day in Vienna, Fellows broke into three groups to discuss violence, interreligious marriage and gender in religion before reconvening for a plenary discussion on key principles of conflict transformation.

The week concluded with a reception in KAICIID's Hall of Dialogue, with the attendance of the Centre's Secretary General, Faisal Bin Muaammar, and three Board Members, Bishop Miguel Ayuso, His Eminence

Metropolitan Emmanuel and Dr. Mohammad Sammak. Although the first training was intense, Fellows still found time to visit Vienna's enchanting forests and explore the old city. Sayyed Ali Khoei, a Shia teacher and researcher from Iraq, was impressed with Vienna's hospitality and tolerance.

"I walked in my Islamic costume through the streets, and no one gave me bad looks," he said. "Everyone was respectful in Vienna. I left the city with great friendships and partnerships."

No longer strangers, the new friends and Fellows returned to their home countries to start practicing the skills they had learned ahead of their next meeting in Kuala Lumpur.



Through IRD theory, the training laid the foundations for the rest of the year. In this photo, Victoria and Father Jose during one of the sessions / Photo: KAICIID



During the sessions, there was also time for fun. In the photo, Janani, Mohammed and Ali share a laugh / Photo: KAICIID



Anas Alabbadi is the Senior Programme Manager of the Fellows Programme and one of the trainers / Photo: KAICIID



Three Board Members shared their experiences with the Fellows. In the photo, Bishop Miguel Ayuso and Metropolitan Emmanuel with Senior Adviser Patrice Brodeur / Photo: KAICIID



## SECOND TRAINING: MOVING FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

For their second training, KAICIID's International Fellows reunited in Kuala Lumpur in May 2015 to design their own interreligious dialogue initiatives.

The Malaysia gathering allowed Fellows to further explore IRD models, learn the basics of designing IRD course syllabi, and meet local religious, interreligious and academic peers.

"Kuala Lumpur was an amazing place and such an interesting experience with its different religions, races, and traditions all living together in the same city," said Mohammed Alsheraifin, a Fellow and professor from Jordan.

During the week, Fellows met with students and faculty at the International Islamic University Malaysia, representatives from the Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Taoism, and members of the World Organization of the Scout Movement. They also visited a Catholic church, Anglican cathedral, Hindu temple, Buddhist temple, Taoist temple and a mosque. These gatherings and sacred site visits offered Fellows tips and strategies for reaching out to diverse minority communities and incorporating religious field visits as part of their IRD initiatives.

"This was a good pedagogical experience," said one Fellow of the site visits. "It was IRD in action and real life experience."

Specific training sessions back in the classroom focused on developing intercultural and interreligious communication skills, facilitation and teaching techniques, project management tactics, and impact assessment strategies.

The Fellows also read articles on famous religious peacemakers from their five faiths. Discussing similarities and differences in these luminaries' approaches to IRD emphasised the benefits of incorporating more than just religious texts in the IRD process.

Most evenings in Kuala Lumpur were set aside to explore the city's bright lights and bustling streets. Some Fellows were fortunate enough to witness a Chinese religious street festival celebrating the birthday of the Goddess Mazu during a night visit to the Thean Hou Temple.

"I was so glad that all of my new friends were able to visit Malaysia and see for themselves what people in this area are like," said Kriya Langputeh, a Muslim Malay Fellow from southern Thailand who did his undergraduate studies in Kuala Lumpur. "I acted as a tour guide and was very happy to share Malaysian culture with them. A lot that we learned from this training helped us prepare for our own initiatives back home."

On their last training day in the city, Fellows worked together to design their own innovative projects aimed at helping religious leaders and actors in their home communities advance peace and reconciliation efforts through IRD. Fellows offered guidance and suggestions to their peers before KAICIID's experts stepped in to provide additional advice, support and mentorship.

Armed with new skills and fresh ideas, the Fellows returned home to implement their ambitious initiatives, keeping in touch with KAICIID staff and the Fellows Network remotely until their next and final training session six months later in Vienna.



Patrice Brodeur, Senior Adviser to KAICIID conducts a training in Kuala Lumpur / Photo: KAICIID



During the training, the Fellows had the opportunity to discuss their experiences and expectations in order to design their Fellows project / Photo: KAICIID



During the religious site visits, the Fellows conducted dialogues both among themselves and with local religious community members. Here, Nageeba Hassan speaks with religious leaders at a Buddhist temple in Kuala Lumpur / Photo: KAICIID



Mandalar, a Buddhist monk, ascends the stairs of a Hindu Temple in Kuala Lumpur / Photo: KAICIID



The Fellows visited several temples during their second training in Kuala Lumpur. The excursion to Batu caves, a Hindu sacred site, was one of the highlights for many Fellows. Here, they descend into the Batu Caves / Photo: KAICIID

## THIRD TRAINING: SHARING INITIATIVES AND PASSING THE TORCH



A key part of the final training was the evaluation and sharing of project implementation experience / Photo: KAICIID

After six months spent implementing and evaluating their IRD initiatives at home, the 2015 Fellows reconvened at KAICIID's headquarters in Vienna to share their projects and welcome in a new class of religious leaders.

"The third training allowed us to reflect on all we had learned over the year and to have fruitful discussions about our work," said Kriya Langputeh, a Fellow from southern Thailand whose initiative trained students to discuss the values, rites, moral principles and beliefs of other religions.

Standing before their peers, Fellows took turns presenting their projects' objectives, obstacles and outcomes, opening discussion about best practices and possible steps forward.

"I can give a lecture or Friday sermon easily, but this was intimidating," said Mohammed Alsheraifin, whose initiative focused on building a culture of dialogue to help correct misperceptions about

different religions in Jordan. "When I saw other Fellows share their initiatives, it gave me the courage to talk about my experience."

Fellow Nageeba Hassan discussed her anti-bullying campaign to reduce teasing in Uganda. Victoria Peláez showcased the intercultural and interreligious dialogue training she provided teenagers in Guatemala to help build peace among peers and mitigate local conflict. Rev. Sr. Agatha Ogochukwu Chikelue and Wiwin Rohmawati's initiatives in Nigeria and Indonesia to help women

from different religious backgrounds engage in interfaith activities were also presented. The Fellows' projects, each as diverse and inspiring as the next, had reached hundreds of people around the world.

**"I have walked in the shoes of those who have seen conflict and those who have created peace; those who teach and those who build communities. I shall never walk in the same way again."**

Most Fellows agreed that their initiatives marked a good starting point to address intolerance and promote understanding but recognised the need for more educational tools and training activities to enhance the effectiveness and longevity of

their work. Heeding their call, trainers outlined sustainability strategies and taught Fellows how to use online and traditional media channels to promote and amplify their efforts.

Fellows then developed the foundation for an IRD manual to be used in future trainings and formalised the mission and objectives of a KAICIID International Fellows Network. This Network would become a natural extension of the WhatsApp and Facebook groups they had used to share readings, lessons and moral support throughout the year.

Fellows agreed that the formal Network should promote KAICIID's vision and mission, engage with current and future religious leaders, and actively create and support IRD at the local, national and international levels to enhance conflict prevention, reconciliation, peacebuilding, and community development.

The 2015 Fellows then met their 2016 counterparts in KAICIID's Hall of Dialogue where the two cohorts learned from each other's experiences. New Fellows said the cross-class exchange was inspiring and "raised the bar" on expectations for their KIFP initiatives. Over dinner, 2015 Fellows shared their work with the new class and discussed

the responsibilities, opportunities and strong relationships the fellowship had provided.

2015 Fellow Rev. Alexander Goldberg said that the diversity of his cohort had allowed him to see the world from a new perspective.

"I have walked in the shoes of those who have seen conflict and those who have created peace; those who teach and those who build communities. I shall never walk in the same way again," he said.

Following the training, a reception and graduation ceremony served as a networking opportunity and interactive space for Fellows to exhibit their initiatives and start saying their long goodbyes.

"That was the crying moment when we were separated," Sayyed Ali Khoei said. "We had built our relationship for a year, and suddenly it was over. It was sad to leave our friends, brothers and sisters, but we keep in touch online and hope to meet again soon."

KAICIID Director General Fahad Abualnaser thanked the 2015 Fellows for their great contributions to IRD and reassured them that this was only the beginning of their journey together as ambassadors of peace.



Mohammed Abu-Nimer, Senior Adviser at KAICIID conducts a training at KAICIID. Abu-Nimer is a trainer for the Fellows Programme / Photo: KAICIID



Wiwin Rohmawati presents her successful Fellows project / Photo: KAICIID

## MESSAGES FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS



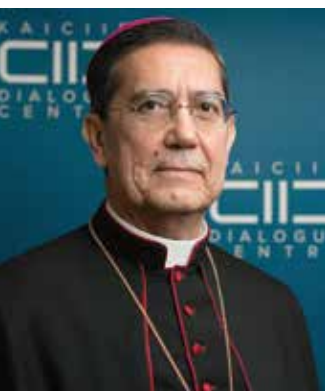
“ IRD presupposes different religions with difference of rituals, dogmas, books, prophets, places of worship, etc. But essential core values would be the same, such as One God, One Universe and One Human Family. Discrimination or exploitation in the name of Caste, Colour, Gender, Nationality or Economic status, slaughter of birds and animals should therefore be considered anti-spiritual and unacceptable violence. Let us join hands and hearts for harmony and happiness for all, as renewal of all our religions. ”

**Swami Agnivesh**



“ As academics and practitioners, you have been studying and teaching during the last few years. However, you will not find in any book what you experienced at KAICIID in 2015 – diversity, honest dialogue and learning from each other. I invite you to be multipliers of what you received and real dialogue ambassadors at home and around the world. ”

**Dr. Hamad Al-Majed**



“ Together you are 16 different nationalities, coming from different realities, and have joined together here, in fraternity and friendship to promote understanding and diversity. ”

**H.E. Bishop Miguel Ayuso**



“ The word ‘dialogue’, which is a Greek word, means that we come together to share an exchange in a continuous, substantial, creative and transparent way. A dialogue has to be sincere. I hope that your experience as Fellows in this programme, was a sincere experience. An experience that you will carry on and share, and that will mark your life. ”

**H. E. Metropolitan Emmanuel**



“ In the Holy Koran, there is a magnificent verse about wisdom: “He gives wisdom to whom He wills, and whoever has been given wisdom has certainly been given benefit overflowing. And none will remember except those of understanding.” (Koran, 2: 269) A very important question arises: When the wisdom is an overflowing benefit, how we can give it or receive it? Let me quote the Holy Bible: “Turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding.” (Proverbs, 2: 2) In other words, if we want to receive the wisdom, we should listen to the others, hearing by ear and heart! ”



**Dr. Sayyed Mohajerani**

“ Congratulations on your achievements. You are the first fruits of KAICIID tree. What you have learned and experienced through this programme is so precious and nothing could replace the development of yourself. I sincerely expect you to play a significant role not only in your communities or institutions but around the world. ”



**Reverend Kosho Niwano**

“ I hope this year has been one of great learning for you. The world is increasingly realising the importance of interreligious engagement and as educators, I wish to encourage you to use this wonderful opportunity to change the narrative of the next generation of religious leaders. ”



**Reverend Mark Poulson**

“ You personify the ideal of unity in diversity – the possibility, indeed the necessity, to forge a society in which the essential differences of our religious traditions together with their respective beauty contribute to the richness and wellbeing of society at large. May your commitment and vision lead to greater understanding, respect, love and harmony in our world. ”



**Chief Rabbi David Rosen**

“ I think what you learned here, and what KAICIID is for, is to build bridges. You are now the bridge builders, peacemakers. We need to promote the culture of dialogue, the culture of accepting differences, not eliminating differences. ”



**Dr. Mohammad Sammak**

## INTRODUCING THE FELLOWS

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**Abdul-Fattah Katende**

“ IRD should not only be taught to students who are studying religious studies, but to everyone because everyone will meet a person of a different religion and needs to work together with people of other religions. ”

**Basmah Ahmed Jastaniah**

“ Everyone who saw me after KAICIID – my family, my institution, my society, my friends – they all said I had changed. My personality, my way of talking, how I organized my workshops was all different. It’s made me more confident. It’s been a major source of inspiration. ”



**Nourah Alhasawi**

“ What I want to get from this dialogue is to grow, listen, understand, respect, help, trust and share thoughts and hopes with the Other and to do all of that without compromising my identity. ”

**Mohammed Issa Alsheraifin**

“ People think everything good and bad comes from religion, but sometimes it is culture, customs, habits, and passions – not religion. We have to keep these separate in our mind, and we have to keep religion far from politics. ”



**Janani Chaitanya**

“ You can’t just say IRD without a commitment to resolve, because if that commitment isn’t there, everything will fall apart. ”



**Kenan Cetinkaya**

“ I wasn't active in interreligious dialogue, but I was experiencing it in myself. ”

**Yusuf Daud**

“ I will spread the interfaith dialogue, not only in terms of formalities, but also in daily life to everyone in the world, as an ambassador for Islam. ”



**Ven. Galkande Dhammananda**

“ As a Buddhist monk, I have gone into deep teaching of Buddhism and I don't find a single thing that says you can use violence as an answer. ”

**Rev. Alexander Goldberg**

“ If you look at some of the steps people have made - from where they were to where they are now, you can't help go, 'wow'. It's an amazing transformation. ”



**Kriya Langputeh**

“ Muslims in southern Thailand don't go to churches. Buddhists don't go to mosques. Christians don't go to temples. We don't mix. If my students go, it might seem strange to others, and they might be afraid, but it will be a very good first step. ”





**Ven. Mandalar Lankara**

“ People ask me why I wear robes, why Muslims eat Halal, why Buddhists eat vegetarian, why Jews eat Kosher. It's easy to criticize other people and for tensions to build when we don't understand what we see. That's why it's so important to share and discuss our differences. ”

**Tegulwa Nageeba Hassan**

“ I just feel that I should have learned this earlier. I would have changed many lives, but I know that it is not too late. ”



**Rev. Jose Nandhikkara**

“ When you take people to a family's home, a lot of prejudices are broken down, because you see the grandmother is doing the same things as your grandmother and the mother is cooking the same. ”

**Rev. Sr. Agatha Ogochukwu Chikelue**

“ Interreligious dialogue is very important and highly needed in Nigeria because of the misuse of religion. ”



**Jessica Sitek**

“ Everyone loves food, and they are interested in seeing the connection between food and religion. Food just seems like a mundane, bodily thing, and what I'm trying to show is that religion can be a bodily thing. ”

**Victoria Pelaez**

“ Social changes are taking place among new generations. Adolescence and youth are appropriate life stages for promoting greater awareness about the needs of social change. ”

**Mabrouka Rayachi**

“ It was a living dialogue. We had differences, surely, but we were also aware that these differences have to be there, otherwise one loses himself. But there are more similarities and we work on these similarities because our objective is to promote peace to make the world better. ”

**Wiwin Rohmawati**

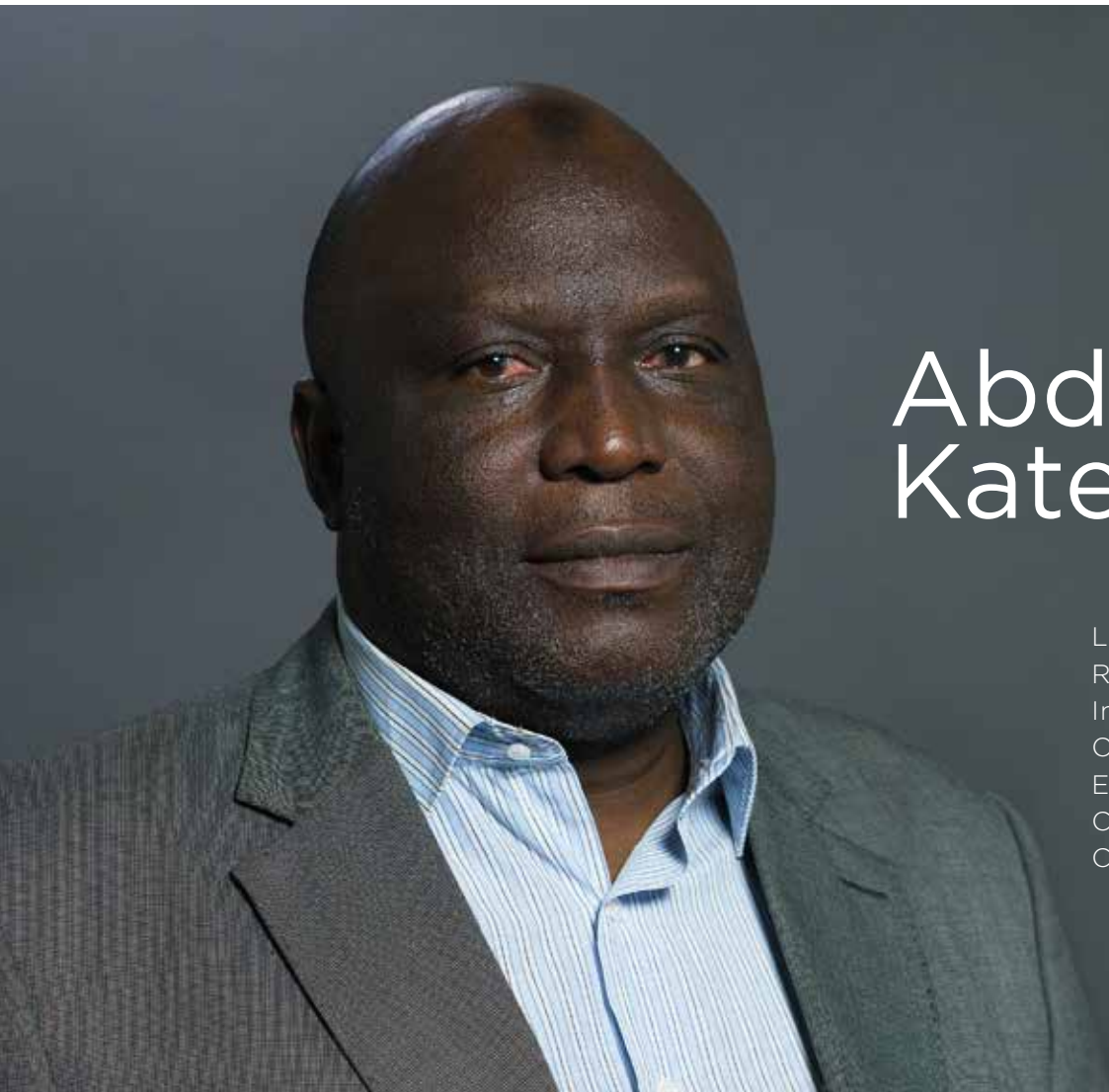
“ Women have a great strength in spreading the values of tolerance, interfaith dialogue and peace to their families and communities. ”

**Sayyed Ali Mohammed Taqi Al-Khoei**

“ With the fear of ISIS, many people now see this big gap between faiths. I want to help bring people back together. We are all in the same country, all of the same creator, all God’s creation. We have to work together. ”

**Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq**

“ We all believe that a good person can be a follower of any faith. ”



# Abdul-Fattah Katende

Languages: English, Arabic, Swahili  
Religious Affiliation: Islam  
Institutional Type: Academic  
Organizations: Makerere University  
Expertise: Peacebuilding  
Country: Uganda  
City: Kampala

## “GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP REQUIRES US TO BE ABLE TO LIVE IN PEACE AND ACCEPT OTHERS”

In our contemporary society, more and more individuals and communities are interacting that had no direct exposure to one another in the past, and to compound these complex dynamics, regional conflicts and subsequent migration continues to funnel communities together, often leading to clashes that emerge because of cultural and religious incongruities. Overcoming these challenges is a key part being a global citizen, and dialogue is essential in fostering the mutual understanding and respect that allows us to live together in spite of our differences.

**“IRD should not only be taught to students who are studying religious studies, but to everyone because everyone will meet a person of a different religion and needs to work together with people of other religions.”**

One member of the 2015 KAICIID International Fellows Programme is an expert in global citizenship education, and is using his skills in dialogue to teach students how to live in peace. Abdul-Fattah has been teaching interreligious dialogue for close to 20 years, and is the Coordinator for the Center for Intercultural Studies and Lecturer in the Department of Religion and Peace Studies at Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda, where he teaches interreligious dialogue – a key part of global citizenship.

“We want to train our youth to live in a globalised world,” he said. “They do not know where they will find themselves tomorrow, so they must learn how to become global citizens. Global citizenship today requires us to be able to live in peace and accept others.”

In his University, Abdul-Fattah is training future secondary school teachers in IRD at the undergraduate level. At the master’s level, he teaches an IRD course that explores mediation techniques and conflict resolution. Many of his post graduate students work as policy makers or in civil society organisations and are writing their master’s theses on IRD.

Religious studies is also a key part of Ugandan primary school education, and Abdul-Fattah trains his students to expose their own students to interreligious dialogue at an early age. Dialogue is especially important in Uganda because it is a multireligious country that is home to more than 50 different tribes.

Introducing students to the benefits of dialogue at a young age is key to imbuing an appreciation

for the importance of dialogue and its essential role in peaceful coexistence, according to Abdul-Fattah.

He has already seen positive results from his trainings, as his former students have initiated clubs in the primary schools where they teach. These peace clubs foster tolerance and acceptance



As part of his Fellows Project, Abdul-Fattah's trainees toured different places of worship. This was meant to acquaint the trainees with what takes place at various religious institutions / Photo: Davies Rwabu

that introduce dialogue in secondary schools and he has seen the transformation firsthand.

“From the beginning you see a lot of prejudices, mistrust and misunderstandings and by the time you finish, all of them understand interreligious dialogue very well.” He begins the sessions by allowing students to air prejudices and misconceptions, which allows them to observe

and address their opinions of others. “You allow them to air these [prejudices], and it is only then that they can open up – if you allow

them,” he said. “You say what you want to say, and the others listen, and at the end of the day we learn a lot from the stories that we have to tell.”

Abdul-Fattah’s teaching was enriched through his participation in KIFP, as he learned different approaches and methods to dialogue and how different religions approach IRD and

**“From the beginning you see a lot of prejudices, mistrust and misunderstandings and by the time you finish, all of them understand interreligious dialogue very well.”**

**A**bdul-Fattah Katende from Uganda has been a lecturer in the Department of Religion and Peace Studies at Makerere University for the last 28 years. He offers lectures in the areas of Islamic Theology, Peace Studies and Interreligious Dialogue. He is also the Coordinator of the Centre for Inter-cultural Studies and Globalisation and the Patron of Makerere University’s Muslim Students’ Association (MUMSA). He has 20 years’ experience in interreligious dialogue and has written and attended many workshops and conferences on the topic in different parts of the world. He is a regular presenter and facilitator at interreligious workshops in the Great Lakes Region. He is a member of several interreligious and intercultural organizations. He has also played an integral role in the founding of numerous Peace Clubs in secondary schools throughout Uganda. His interests include service to humanity, interacting with people of different religions and cultures, watching football and travelling. His motto is “May Peace Prevail on Earth”.

## MEET THE FELLOWS

peacebuilding. After his participation in the KAICIID International Fellows Programme, he was given the training to conduct a training of trainers in addition to his course. This ToT was intended to train his students to be trainers themselves, so that they can spread dialogue to both primary and secondary schools and in the communities where they live and work. He is also working to make interreligious and intercultural dialogue a part of the larger university curriculum.

“IRD should not only be taught to students who are studying religious studies, but to everyone because everyone will meet a person of a different religion and needs to work together with people of other religions.”

Through the Fellows Programme, he was able to share and learn from the challenges facing his fellow IRD practitioners, and he feels that there is a lot to learn from the way that each practitioner overcomes challenges in his or her own respective environment. For example, Abdul-Fattah has helped another Fellow through the challenges in his community that are a result of ongoing conflicts in the Middle East. He believes that interaction and collaboration with the other Fellows will not end at the end of the KIFP, but will continue between the Fellows cohort and KAICIID.

“I believe that in the future, KAICIID will be able to build a pool of religious persons who will carry on the message interreligious dialogue. And I think if you have such a rich pool of people all over the world, you will have a very rich resource,” he said. “The world needs it much more than it needed it yesterday. We really need to intensify our work. We cannot do it on our own.”



Abdul-Fattah facilitating the training session on becoming an IRD peacebuilder and facilitator / Photo: Davies Rwabu



Abdul-Fattah's initiative trained 30 students on IRD, aiming to combat violence, hatred and intolerance / Photo: Davies Rwabu



Trainees met with the Mufti of Uganda H.E Sheikh Shaban Mubajje, who welcomed the students to the UMSC Headquarters and urged them to be advocates of IRD in their communities / Photo: Davies Rwabu

# MAKERERE UNIVERSITY TRAINING OF TRAINERS ON INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

4 - 7 August 2015

**A**bdul Fattah's project was carried out at Makerere University with support from KAICIID and the Nile Dialogue Platform in Kampala, Uganda. It was intended to train and equip 30 Makerere University Religious Studies students who had just completed their studies with the necessary knowledge and skills to become trainers and facilitators of Interreligious Dialogue.

The project was conceived after the KAICIID International Fellows Programme's first training. Abdul-Fattah felt encouraged by KAICIID to design and develop a project that would respond to his country's specific needs. Without his participation in KIFP, he says, this project would not have been implemented.

## OBJECTIVES

**1** To empower participants by acknowledging their experience with interreligious dialogue and by learning new skills, so they can serve in different areas of Uganda and beyond

**2** To train beneficiaries in conflict transformation so as to become active peacemakers in their respective communities

**3** To teach students the culture of tolerance and respect for all religions

**4** To develop linkages between Makerere University and students within the wider community

## OUTPUTS

The project ensured the participants' appreciation of interreligious dialogue as a means of creating an atmosphere of peaceful coexistence among adherents of different religions and as a viable conflict resolution mechanism. Dialogue emerged as one of the effective instruments for peace. Participants noted that "peace is a universal value and is not a monopoly of any particular religion."

## IMPACTS

Replicating this training into several similar trainings in different parts of the country is Abdul-Fattah's ultimate aim. "The continuity and sustainability of this project is very important for reinforcing peaceful coexistence in Uganda and the Great Lakes region due to the ripple effects of such initiatives." He further mentioned that he intends to link KAICIID, Makerere University, the Nile Dialogue Platform and other organizations to continue supporting this noble initiative. Participants also expressed their appreciation for this programme, which will lead the way in combating violence, hatred and intolerance – especially among youth. One participant noted that "through such trainings we shall be able to counter prejudice and injustice and ensure peaceful coexistence among followers of different religions."

## MESSAGES FOR ABDUL-FATTAH



“ Abdul Katende is inspiring for his quietude and careful use of words. Alert in classes, he would listen to class materials and ask questions that reflected a deep engagement with the material. Abdul’s openness to different perspectives, ideas and challenges gives one confidence to frankly discuss any issue with him. ”

Janani Chaitanya



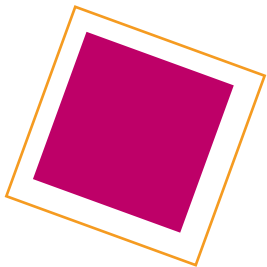
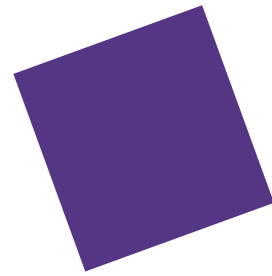
“ I must start my words with my ever growing respect for your decade-long teaching experience, fullness, and authentic interpretation of the ongoing challenges around religious communities in the world. During our hours-long conversations after KAICIID’s programme, I learned a lot from you. Your recommendations and suggestions about teaching interreligious and intercultural dialogue in a more efficient way and your thoughts about solving problems among Muslim communities enlightened me so much. Your willingness to learn also from my naïve experiences about IRD and respect for my knowledge impressed me and taught me that humbleness is a sign of being an authentic scholar and dialogue advocate. ”

Kenan Cetinkaya

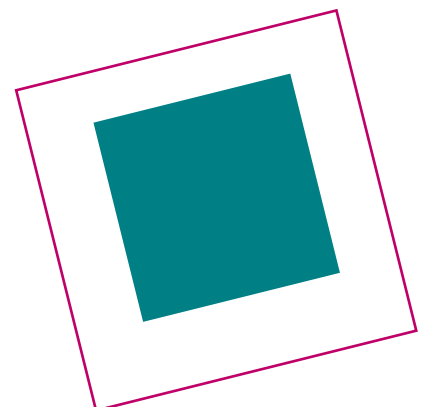


“ Abdu, first my lecturer and now my colleague, thank you for the kindness you showed to me as I studied and for what you have given to all your students over the years, especially to those who could have dropped out along the way. Thank you for your mentorship as I worked in the community and for encouraging me to do a better work. Thank you for giving me space to speak as a woman, a leader and an ambassador at the event you organised to celebrate Interfaith Harmony Week. Thank you. ”

Nageeba Hassan



DIALOGUE NOT ONLY  
EXPOSES ONE TO  
OTHER FAITHS, BUT  
ALSO BRINGS ONE  
CLOSER TO ONE'S  
OWN FAITH.







# Basmah Ahmed Jastaniah

Languages: English, Arabic  
Religious Affiliation: Islam  
Institutional Type: Academic  
Organizations: Taibah University  
Expertise: Theology  
Country: Saudi Arabia  
City: Medina

## “I WANTED TO FIND WHERE THE FAITHS ALIGN”

**B**asmah Ahmed Jastaniah is no stranger to high-stakes dialogue. As an accredited trainer with the King Abdulaziz Centre for National Dialogue in Saudi Arabia, she has long worked to promote dialogue.

Despite expertise in dialogue techniques and more than a decade studying Christianity and comparative religions, Basmah credits KAICIID with providing her first real introduction to IRD.

“Our country is a Muslim country. The KAICIID fellowship was a great opportunity to sit at one table with people of so

many different faiths and to share our religions from our own perspectives.”

She describes the fellowship as “a dream come true.” In many ways, it was.

**“Everyone who saw me after KAICIID - my family, my institution, my society, my friends - they all said I had changed. My personality, my way of talking, how I organized my workshops was all different. It's made me more confident. It's been a major source of inspiration.”**

After growing up in Jeddah, Basmah moved to Mecca, Islam's holiest city, to complete a master's degree on Christianity at Umm Al-Qura University.

“I wanted to look at religion outside my country and to learn about Christianity

face-to-face with those who practice the faith,

not just based on what I read in books. Christianity is the closest religion to Islam, and we have some shared beliefs. I wanted to find where the faiths align.”

In the course of her studies and travels, Basmah read the Bible and Torah and spoke with Christians in Europe, the U.S., Kenya and Southeast Asia. Now an associate professor of theology and religion at Taibah University in Medina, she’s working on intra-Muslim dialogue.

“We need to correct people’s perceptions about this and represent Islam as a religion that clearly accepts others. We live together, but we need to accept each other, too. When I tell local people that the Prophet Mohammad once received Christians in a mosque and allowed them to pray, they are surprised and want to learn more. They want more dialogue.”

Basmah’s two-day KIFP initiative at Taibah University in October 2015 introduced 30 master’s students and professors to basic principles of dialogue through trainings and workshops. The seminars were designed to improve their critical thinking skills and to emphasise how intercultural and interreligious dialogue are essential tools for peaceful coexistence.

“I want my students to get this ability, to learn the skills of national, international and interreligious dialogue, and to accept each other within Islam before learning about and dialoguing with people outside of their religion. When they accept the other, it doesn’t matter if he is Muslim, Christian or Jewish.”

**“The KAICIID fellowship was a great opportunity to sit at one table with people of so many different faiths and to share our religions from our own perspectives.”**



Basmah credits KAICIID with providing her first real introduction to IRD / Photo: KAICIID

Basmah says her ultimate goal is to transform the students she trains into positive ambassadors for Islam. To better accomplish this mission, she is working with Taibah University to introduce a comprehensive master’s programme on interreligious dialogue.

While the KIFP enhanced Basmah’s IRD skills to promote peaceful coexistence, it also gave her a chance to dispel some stereotypes about her faith and country.

“With five faiths sitting together, the Fellows changed their ideas about Islam and about Saudi Arabia. They see that Islam is

far from a terrorist religion. They see that Saudi is more than oil, camels and tents! I think the Fellows did not expect to see two Saudi women as KAICIID Fellows focused on acceptance and tolerance of other religions. They were pleased to see that it’s acceptable for us to sit with them and all have dinner together at the same table.”

**B**asmah Ahmed Jastaniah is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities with a specialization in Faith, Religions and Creeds. She is an active member of the University’s Social Committee and often gives lectures, trainings and speaks at conferences. She has also participated in research and supervised a number of scientific papers and discussions on the topic of voluntary work and its role in the development of social values among young people. Dr Jastaniah was proud to have served as the Dean of Studies at Taibah University from 2009-2012. On a personal level, she is proud of her ethics and charisma and hopes that she is able to motivate and inspire her students. She asks Allah Almighty to help her in all things and to continue to provide her the guidance to be a good role model to those around her.

## MEET THE FELLOWS

Even Basmah admits she was somewhat positively surprised to represent Saudi alongside Nourah Alhasawi, head of the Islamic Studies Department at Princess Noura bint Abdulrahman University in Riyadh.

“To be the first Saudi nominees and ambassadors for peace, and we are both women, can you imagine how exciting that was for me? It was amazing. Everyone who saw me after KAICIID – my family, my institution, my society, my friends – they all said I had changed. My personality, my way of talking, how I organized my workshops was all different. It’s made me more confident. It’s been a major source of inspiration.”

In her view, KAICIID and the KIFP have given her a “license” to dialogue beyond her country’s borders.

Moving forward, Basmah plans to expand her studies beyond Islam and Christianity, examining other major religions to advance IRD and work towards creating true tolerance in the world.

She hopes KAICIID and the Fellows network continue to provide her a “shortcut” to gather



credible information, knowledge and sources about other belief systems.

“It’s so easy to get through to colleagues of other faiths when we have workshops, go on walks together in new cities, talk about our families and institutions. It’s like getting an extra diploma in just a few days. Even though the year has ended, social media has kept us very close.”



During the Fellows’ graduation, Basmah presented the initiative she implemented at Taibah University / Photo: KAICIID



# INTERNATIONAL APPLICATIONS INTO INTERRELIGIOUS & INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE

7 - 8 October 2015

**B**asmah Jastaniah is an Associate Professor of Theology and Religion at Taibah University. She is working to integrate dialogue into the university curriculum to introduce future graduates of the Department of Islamic Studies to dialogue methods and experiences. For her Fellows initiative, she designed and implemented the project “Let’s dialogue”, a series of trainings and workshops to promote the principles of dialogue and offer her students a dialogic experience. Ultimately, she hopes to introduce a Master’s programme that specialises in interreligious dialogue. Her concept is currently under review.

## OBJECTIVES

**1** To equip participants with the necessary knowledge, skills and capabilities to improve dialogue within their communities

**2** To introduce trainees to interreligious and intercultural dialogue principles and involve them in real-life application

**3** To develop a committed group of practitioners who could carry on the noble mission of promoting the principles of dialogue and coexistence among different religions and cultures

## OUTPUTS

KAICIID’s approach to dialogue inspired Taibah University to develop and implement the course “The Dialogue Principles” as part of the Islamic Culture master’s programme. The teaching of intercultural and interreligious dialogue was not restricted to a transmission of knowledge, rather it highlighted the importance of experience and encounter. Overall, participants developed their critical thinking and learned how intercultural and interreligious dialogue are essential tools for peaceful coexistence. Basmah feels that the course has the potential to grow and expand for PhD students as well. KAICIID helped enhance the programme’s implementation through guidance, technical and material support, she said.

## IMPACTS

“There is no doubt that KIFP and KAICIID provided an opportunity for us to see things differently,” she said. “We were blessed to participate in KIFP as it enabled us to meet and socialise with colleagues from different religions and cultures. Moreover, when it comes to personal enrichment, I believe that this programme has developed my knowledge, awareness and skills in IRD. This experience marked my professional life by giving me new skills to promote peaceful coexistence.”

## MESSAGES FOR BASMAH



“ Basmah is a truly inspiring figure for me. She is a progressive and very open-minded Arab woman both in thought and action. This is proven by her strong commitment to spread the IRD discourse through her institution, Taibah University, by initiating a Master and PhD programme on IRD. I am very much impressed and inspired by her incredible effort. I am very optimistic that in the future there will be a great female leader, like her and also Nourah, in Saudi Arabia that will transform the society into a better society for all, men and women. In addition, personally Basmah is very kind and such a caring person. Shukran kathir, Sister Basmah! ”

Wiwin Rohmawati




“ I have learnt so much from Basmah over the course of the year. Our conversations on Jewish - Muslim relations have helped to reshape my own worldview. Basmah asks the right questions and shows patience and understanding in getting to know and understand the other. She has educated us all online. I hope she continues to do so for many years to come. Through Basmah I have a much better understanding of Islam in Saudi Arabia and a deeper insight into the important role of senior women of faith in her community. ”

Rev. Alexander Goldberg



“ Even though Basmah and I are from the same country, I did not know her before I met her in KAICIID. It was a pleasure to see how much she enjoyed the programme and how she worked so hard to participate in promoting the culture of IRD in her community. ”

Nourah Alhasawi



**INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE IS ABOUT PEOPLE OF DIFFERENT RELIGIOUS IDENTITIES SEEKING AND REACHING MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING AND RESPECT, WHICH ALLOWS THEM TO LIVE AND COOPERATE WITH EACH OTHER DESPITE THEIR DIFFERENCES.**



# Nourah Alhasawi

Languages: English, Arabic  
Religious Affiliation: Islam  
Institutional Type: Academic  
Organizations: Princess Noura Bent Abdurrahman University  
Expertise: Islamic Studies, Gender, Human Rights  
Country: Saudi Arabia  
City: Riyadh

## NOURAH AND JANANI: A STORY OF ENCOUNTER, FRIENDSHIP AND DIALOGUE

Two members of the 2015 KAICIID Fellows cohort are not only learning methods of interreligious dialogue, but are practising and analysing dialogue through their own experiences. They are writing a dual narrative on their thoughts and experience around discussing thorny topics like clothing and custom, violence and faith.

The Fellows - Nourah Alhasawi, accomplished scholar and Associate Professor at the Islamic Studies Department at the Princess Noura Bent Abdurrahman University in Riyadh, and Janani Chaitanya, Hindu and teacher at Arsha Vijnana Gurukulam in Oregon, USA, are

dialoguing together over difficult religious topics and compiling these shared experiences into a book for their Fellows project.

Their book, which originated from the very first Fellows training in Vienna in February 2015, describes the experience, challenges and

**“I could talk to her about these deep topics and it was like, this is someone that I can talk to, but again, I didn’t know how she took the things we talked about. Then she came to me the next day about the book.”**

stereotypes the two women encountered together through a unique format of documenting their conversations, and describing their simultaneous thoughts and reactions. They hope to show how the con-

versation about difficult topics evolves and what their underlying thoughts and emotions are. By



# Janani Chaitanya

Languages: English, Sanskrit  
 Religious Affiliation: Hinduism  
 Institutional Type: Religious  
 Organizations: Arsha Vijnana Gurukulam  
 Expertise: Vedanta, Education, Counseling  
 Country: United States  
 City: Eugene

showing what the experience of dialogue can feel like to individuals, the book will help the Fellows better understand the reactions of people during a facilitated dialogue.

“What I want to get from this dialogue is to grow, listen, understand, respect, help, trust and share thoughts and hopes with the Other and to do all of that without compromising my identity”, Nourah said. “I know many people who think it cannot be achieved. Can I do it?”

When they first met at the Fellows training, Nourah and Janani encountered their own prejudices and stereotypes when exploring differences in their faith and in their religions that were initially difficult for the two of them to overcome.

“So there was a little bit of ‘this is interesting, this isn’t comfortable.’ It occurred to me that this is

what interreligious dialogue takes – there are these things that are going to touch us in these personal ways,” Janani said. “I had a lot more questions, and this idea of seeing how far we could push this dialogue with the desire to make it work – that we could be able to accept each other.”

**“You can’t just say IRD without a commitment to resolve, because if that commitment isn’t there, everything will fall apart.”**

Janani pitched the idea of writing the book to Nourah the next evening, to Nourah’s initial surprise. They later found that this book could be a very useful method to bring them together to address and evaluate their own stereotypes and improve their skills as practitioners of teaching.

“I could talk to her about these deep topics and it was like, this is someone that I can talk to, but again, I didn’t know how she took the things we talked about. Then she came to me the next day about the book,” said Nourah.



## MEET THE FELLOWS

Their writing process starts with their discussions about numerous pre-defined topics, the transcription of which is sent back and forth between the two of them until they get a workable draft that is then sent to an editor and then to KAICIID. This is unique because each dialogue includes their verbal conversation as well as their internal conversations and reactions that are later to be discussed during the editing process.

However, at one point, the pair was overwhelmed by religious, cultural and linguistic incongruities that threatened to derail the project entirely. Through discussing their feelings and concerns, they overcame their misunderstandings and differences and evolved into fast friends.

“You can’t just say IRD without a commitment to resolve, because if that commitment isn’t there, everything will fall apart,” said Janani.



In addition to her academic work in Riyadh, Nourah is an accredited dialogue trainer and a published author / Photo: KAICIID



“This has to be a commitment by us, by the people participating, so it is about committing to putting your faith in it until you see it through.”

They also visited each other’s students in Saudi Arabia and the US to test their theories about stereotypes and dialogue. “It was so fascinating to watch,” said Janani. “All the questions they came up with, were the very questions I had come up with. We hit on all of the topics.”

While in Saudi Arabia, besides spending time with Nourah’s family and friends, the two met with public officials, including a Shura Counsel member and a judge. They also spoke with a London based Saudi BBC journalist about bias in reporting.

“Janani and I were together talking about our experience,” Nourah followed. “Some people came with curiosity, you can see in their eyes that they are maybe coming with their own background and stereotypes but you can also see it through their eyes when it has changed – and in their smiles.”

**N**ourah Alhasawi holds a PhD in Islamic Studies and specializes in Sunnah, the Prophet Mohammed’s biography, teachings and their documentation. She is an Associate Professor and former Head of the Islamic Studies Department in Princess Noura Bent Abdulrahman University in Riyadh. During her career, she held a number of positions such as Vice Dean for Students Affairs and Head of the Female Department of the “Awareness and Social Rehabilitation Society”. Nourah holds accreditation as a trainer from the International Academy for Training (Antrac) and is also an accredited trainer with the King Abdulaziz Centre for National Dialogue. She has participated in many training-related activities such as programme design, social work and specialised academic research. Nourah is the author of *Your Guide to Successful Dialogue among Civilizations*, published by the King Abdulaziz Centre for National Dialogue. Her other published works include *Evidence of a Sole Narrator of Hadeeth*, *The Life of Aisha*, and *The Marriage System in Arab Society Before and After Islam*.



The more they dialogue with the students and with themselves, the more they are able to understand their own stereotypes and those of others. Though they had difficulties, understanding their own prejudices and misconceptions, they shared a change in their mindsets – and discovered a shared sense of humour.

“The book is hopefully capturing these personal moments, I know it takes a lot for both of us to commit to share in order to help others on this path see that it’s doable and that people really have done this, and yes, they have seen these difficulties,” Janani said. “Its not something that is easy or to be undertaken lightly. It does require looking inwards to actually resolve anything.”



Being raised in a Christian family, Janani adopted the Hindu way of life after studying Vedanta / Photo: KAICIID



During the book writing process, Nourah and Janani have met in different places around the world. In the photo, they are together in Salt Lake City, USA, attending the Parliament of the World's Religions / Photo: KAICIID

Janani Chaitanya, whose full spiritual name is Jananisri, has studied Vedanta since 2007. She has completed a three and a half year intensive Vedanta and Sanskrit course in India with Pujya Swamiji Dayananda, the foremost scholar of Sanskrit and Vedanta alive today. Pujya Swamiji blessed her with the name Jananisri, meaning Divine Mother, at the end of her study in India. Janani teaches beginners' Sanskrit, Vedanta and Vedic chanting. She also assists her teacher, Swamini Svātmavidyanandaji, editing and publishing teachings of Vedanta. Through her study of Vedanta, Janani has embraced the Hindu way of life. She was educated at a convent school and, until her emigration to the U.S. in 1983, regularly attended Church of England services at her local village church. This background gives her a unique insight into interreligious dialogue, born of resolving conflicting issues within oneself. She has used this ability to engage in non-confrontational discussions with those from differing religious backgrounds. In her professional capacity, Janani worked at a cognitive behavioral research center, where federally-funded behavioural scientists focused on developing interventions to help families in crisis. Following graduation from law school, she worked as a mediator in a court-mandated programme for parents in transition, helping them develop appropriate parenting plans. Currently she works as an advocate for people who have been impacted by crimes committed by youth. She lives her life simply, following her Guru's words: “one must grow from being a consumer, to being a contributor.”

## TWO WOMEN, TWO RELIGIONS, TWO CULTURES: A DIALOGUE

29 June - 2 July 2015

**D**uring their participation in the KAICIID International Fellows Programme 2015, Nourah Alhasawi and Janani Chaitanya, two women from diverse religious backgrounds, committed to working together as a team in a project to produce a book – a book about dialogue. Their book is an attempt to capture their personal experiences and show the innate challenges of dialogue across cultures and religions and to promote the use of the methodologies of interreligious dialogue. This book was a unique way to bring the two practitioners together to address and evaluate their own stereotypes. This project will produce learning material that will serve student trainers and facilitators of dialogue who wish to obtain a deeper understanding of the values and power of dialogue, as a resource and tool of conflict reconciliation. “We have incorporated the valuable interreligious dialogue training that we have received from our professors at KAICIID. Given their own expertise in the field of interreligious dialogue and working within different cultures, we hope to understand and further highlight how various difficulties can be approached and successfully resolved.”

### OBJECTIVES

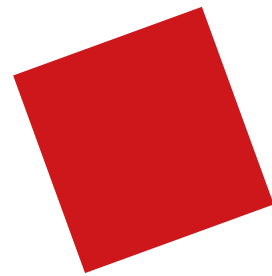
**1** To write a book that potentially can be used by KAICIID in trainings

**2** To help other practitioners in their IRD work

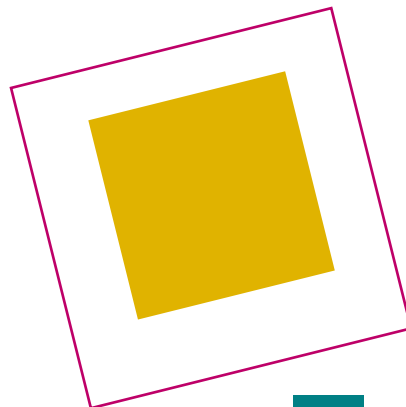
**3** To highlight the skills and commitment that it takes to have a meaningful and useful interreligious dialogue

### OUTPUTS

As part of the KAICIID Fellows Network, Janani and Nourah gave a presentation together at the Parliament of the World’s Religions in Salt Lake City to reflect on their cooperation and to discuss their project. Following the presentation, several participants expressed interest in the project including Georgetown University, which wished to host a book release event. Additionally, a publisher expressed interest in publishing the book as well as making a documentary of the project. Together, they consider their strong spiritual practice that promotes peaceful coexistence both important and useful in their interaction. Janani takes refuge in the teachings of Vedanta that state there is nothing but God, allowing any challenges to be resolved in accepting what is. Nourah takes refuge in Allah and the teachings of the Prophet that state there is no God but Allah and Muhammed is his messenger. With this differentiation between both, Janani and Nourah continue their dialogue through the challenges with the goal of harmonious and peaceful coexistence based on mutual respect.



**MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING IS  
KEY TO MUTUAL RECOGNITION  
AND APPRECIATION, WHICH  
LEADS TO SOCIAL COHESION.**



## MESSAGES FOR NOURAH



“ She is one of my best friends. She is studious and serious. She admires her country and is proud of it. Before I met her, I didn't know much about Saudi women. She has given me a clearer picture and an excellent perspective of Saudi women. She comes from a conservative society, however she is able to combine the traditional and the modern. Her ability to marry humbleness and pride has had a great effect on me. Her commitment to her responsibilities and her devotion to harmony has inspired me to do more to work towards harmony in the world.”

Mohammed Issa Alsheraifin



“ Nourah's generosity of spirit and willingness to examine how she interacts with the world based on her religion are the mark of courage. She is at once knowledgeable and open to learning new things. Her questions during the training sessions helped focus one on the challenges of interreligious dialogue, thereby providing valuable insights. Her innate curiosity meant that she never missed out on the opportunity to have new experiences whether it be playing curling or visiting places of worship of differing faiths.”

Janani Chaitanya



“ Nourah is one of the most intelligent people that I have had the privilege of meeting. She has brought new insights to the area of international religious dialogue. What has been great is seeing her collaboration with Janani. Their project and relationship has been one of the high points of the Fellows Programme. I can't wait to read the book when it comes out. I really enjoyed our conversations.”

Rev. Alexander Goldberg



## MESSAGES FOR JANANI



“ Knowing Janani for more than a year through co-authoring a book on IRD makes me wonder what to write about. It was a long rich journey and it is not finished yet. Should I talk about the lovely times or the difficult situations? The friendship or the hardship? I think it is both, the good and the hard times, that makes knowing somebody a great experience. ”

Nourah Alhasawi



“ Janani grew up not far from me but has taken a very different journey. In the last year she has revealed the story of that journey and given me fresh insights into the Hindu faith both in India and the USA. I have enjoyed our conversations and exploring some of the shared ideas and values between her faith and mine. She has reinforced my belief that people of faith have more in common than not, even if they mark that faith in different ways sometimes. I look forward to seeing the Nourah and Janani book. It should make interesting reading. ”

Rev. Alexander Goldberg



“ Janani demolished one of my stereotypes in our first meeting itself. For me, Hindus are people in India or who have Indian origin. Janani - though the name sounds Indian, is not from India. She is from the Western world. Her piety towards the religion where she found peace amazed me. She is a unique character I met on this journey. ”

Ven. Galkande Dhammananda



# Mohammed Issa Alsheraifin

Languages: English, Arabic, Turkish  
Religious Affiliation: Islam  
Institutional Type: Academic  
Organizations: Shariat Al-albayt University  
Expertise: Islamic Studies, Gender, Human Rights  
Country: Jordan  
City: Irbid

## “THE STAKES HAVE NEVER BEEN HIGHER”

For Professor Mohammed Alsheraifin, intrareligious and intercultural dialogue has never been a job. What started as a hobby nearly 20 years ago became a mission and calling when the so-called Islamic State began terrorizing his region.

“We live in a disaster area,” Mohammed said from his home in Irbid, Jordan, near the Syrian border. Just days before, the Jordanian government foiled an ISIS attack on civilian targets in the city. For this humble professor and preacher, “the stakes have never been higher.”

Mohammed teaches Islamic Sociology and Islamic Culture at al-Bayt University in Mafraq, also near the Syrian border and just a few kilometres from

the Middle East’s largest refugee camp Zaatari. Despite their advanced education, some of his students are still attracted to ISIS’ radical ideology and rhetoric.

**“People think everything good and bad comes from religion, but sometimes it is culture, customs, habits, and passions – not religion. We have to keep these separate in our mind, and we have to keep religion far from politics.”**

“They think ISIS will make them strong and take them to paradise. They think it will make them rich and will help them marry. We need to deal with these youth who admire ISIS and want to join them, because once they go, they will never come back.”

Mohammed saves these disenfranchised and disillusioned youth from the so-called ISIS and from themselves by gaining their trust and acceptance, which paves the way for dialogue.



“My aim is to explain true Islam to students and to address their fears, to keep us all living together and far from conflict.”

A major theme in his work and outreach is teaching students how to distinguish between religion and tradition. Mohammed emphasised this distinction through his KIFP initiative, which brought together 30 students from the University of al-Bayt Shariah faculty for 20 lectures and workshops in the summer of 2015.

“People think everything good and bad comes from religion, but sometimes it is culture, customs, habits, and passions – not religion. We have to keep these separate in our mind, and we have to keep religion far from politics.”

Several workshops touched on interreligious understanding, but most addressed intrareligious dialogue within Sunni Islam, Jordan’s predominant faith. Mohammed believes these internal discussions are key to establishing sustainable peace in the Levant and beyond.

“I start with a very simple question, and we progress from there. Does Islam promote dialogue? How does Islam deal with others according to the Koran? How do we deal with

traditions that promote or encourage conflict? Is it necessary to kill people who convert from Islam? By asking these questions, we are able to deal with them, and if we succeed, we are able to change mind-sets.”

Mohammed started wrestling with these questions and initiating intercultural dialogue when he moved to Turkey for his doctoral studies in 1999. Observing the country’s unfamiliar traditions caused him to reflect on his own customs and to pay closer attention to what separates doctrinal faith from cultural practice. He uses this framework to address controversial issues – including gender, sexuality, and human rights – in his writing and regular media appearances.

“I can say I don’t accept something you think, but I have to accept you and deal with you as a human being. Accepting the Other does not necessarily mean accepting their faiths or habits. We must respect each other and keep ourselves from judging, even if we think the other person is wrong.”

Mohammed makes this point to worshippers in regular Friday sermons around Jordan and to the preachers he trains for the Ministry of Islamic Affairs. He does this work not to satisfy the government, but in an effort to encourage and create peace.

**“My goal is difficult, and I am only one person. We need more people who believe that the role of religion is not to make conflict.”**

**M**ohammed Issa Alsheraifin is currently a professor and Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Shariah at al-Bayt University, Jordan. He worked as a lecturer at a number of academic institutions across the Middle East for over 13 years. As a published scholar and avid promoter of moderate interpretations of Islam and proponent of dialogue, he has given lectures, presentations and speeches, been featured on radio and TV shows, serves as a Friday Sermon preacher, marriage counselor and mediator. He is an active scholar who has published over 70 papers, books and newspaper articles in addition to supervising and critiquing 80 Masters and PhD dissertations and theses. His research focuses mainly on revisiting Islamic scripts and synthesizing instruments and propositions relating to a wide array of areas including palliative care, women rights, intellectual and cultural resilience, extremism, human rights, performance and effectiveness, motivation, dialogue, and communication skills. Professor Alsheraifin has spoken at a number of American and British universities on issues relating to interreligious dialogue and Islamic manuscripts. He was selected for study at the U.S. Institute on Religious Pluralism. Recently, he was selected as a panelist at the Pluralism Symposium organized by the General Iftaa Departments, Jordan.



## MEET THE FELLOWS

Although Mohammed faces obvious challenges in promoting intercultural dialogue and advancing peacebuilding efforts in Jordan, he draws inspiration from other Fellows who, in his view, face far greater hardships.

“When I heard what the Fellows in Pakistan, India and Myanmar must deal with, it all sounded more difficult than what we face in Jordan. If they can succeed under those conditions, then I can succeed here.”

In future trainings, Mohammed plans to expand his initiative beyond al-Bayt University, bringing youth from the local Bedouin community and refugees from Zaatari to the dialogue table. He also wants to create more training opportunities specifically for local women.

“We have to deal with the local culture of pride so that we can change the way women are dealt with.

For the camps, we must deal with how to keep people from joining ISIS. In all of these cases, we must deal with how politicians and media misuse religion as a tool. My goal is difficult, and I am only one person. We need more people who believe that the role of religion is not to make conflict.”



What Mohammed learned from other Fellows during the trainings served as inspiration for his work / Photo: KAICIID



Mohammed teaches at al-Bayt University in Jordan, near the Syrian border. He plans to involve youth from the local Bedouin community and refugees in future dialogue initiatives / Photo: Mohammed Alsheraifin



## BUILDING A CULTURE OF DIALOGUE

21 June - 5 July 2015

**P**rofessor Mohammed Alsheraifin conducted this project through the Faculty of Shariah at the University of al-Bayt and the King Zain Alsharaf Association in Almafraaq City, Jordan. It focused on building a “culture of dialogue” that can help correct misconceptions about different religions and increase awareness and appreciation of different religious traditions, cultures and customs. It also addressed misperceptions about Islam. His initiative aimed to promote tolerance, pluralism and acceptance of the ‘Other’ from an Islamic perspective.

### OBJECTIVES

**1** To promote IRD from an Islamic perspective

**2** To foster respect for different customs, traditions and religions

**3** To raise students’ cultural awareness

**4** To highlight the constructive role that dialogue can play in reducing violence and building a culture of peace

### TARGET GROUP

Mohammed trained members of the next generation of religious leaders of various cultural backgrounds on peace, interreligious and intercultural dialogue and the ethics of disagreement, aiming to build their capacity so that they can work as peacebuilders and ambassadors for peace in their respective environments. The training combined lectures, interactive sessions and final written exams/evaluation. The applied examples of dialogue for peacebuilding were taken from the Sunnah. The legitimacy of peace, stability and dialogue was elaborated on the basis of core sources of Islam, i.e. the Koran and the Sunnah.

### OUTPUTS

These objectives were addressed by involving 30 students from the faculty of Shariah in a series of 20 lectures and workshops. As a result of the training, participants demonstrated the capacity to use dialogue effectively in promoting peaceful coexistence between people of diverse cultures despite their differences. The students developed their critical thinking, learned to use religion as a tool for peace and learned to counter the misuse of religion. The training equipped them with the skills to adopt leadership roles for the prosperity of their communities.

### IMPACTS

Mohammed described the training as a wonderful experience for all, facilitators and students, and stated that the interaction with students gave him the greatest encouragement to continue his work.

## MESSAGES FOR MOHAMMED



“ Alsheraifin, thank you for your continuous sense of humour, especially with Prof. Mohammed. Your humour is contagious and we all kept laughing at jokes. I would like to thank you for being yourself at all times. I know you are sceptical about being part of other religious rituals and that’s ok. But other people are ok with participating. At KAICIID, they have the responsibility to make us all feel safe and to freely participate. Prof. Abu-Nimer made it clear: unless the environment is safe, dialogue will not happen. Thank you for helping me reflect more on that. You are a great person. I miss you and admire your work. ”

Nageeba Hassan




“ Dr. Mohammed, a friend with whom I had great debates, and a very wise and knowledgeable person. I had wonderful laughs with him and enjoyed our time in ice bowling. We spoke about how some people want to destroy the reputation of some sects, beliefs and religions. With his beautiful ideas, many would benefit from his classes. I wish I could join and also benefit from them. I wish him all the best. ”

Sayyed Ali Khoei



“ Alsheraifin was always candid about his thoughts and what he believes. Sometimes you agree with him and sometimes you do not, but regardless, the conversation will be interesting. I am looking forward to seeing his future work and initiatives in IRD and I wish him the best. ”

Nourah Alhasawi



THROUGH DIALOGUE, WE  
CAN OVERCOME PREJUDICES  
AND MISUNDERSTANDINGS  
THAT JEOPARDIZE SOCIAL  
COHESION AND PEACE.



# Kenan Cetinkaya

Languages: English, Turkish, Arabic, German  
Religious Affiliation: Islam  
Institutional Type: Academic  
Organizations: Bozok University  
Expertise: Theology, Education  
Country: Turkey  
City: Yozgat

## “IF YOU KNOW HOW TO SPEAK TO THE HEART, YOU CAN MAKE GOOD BRIDGES”

Professor Kenan Cetinkaya had to leave his Turkish home in order to find his own place within interreligious dialogue.

From 6<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade, at Imam Hatip High School, Kenan received classical Islamic education for becoming a Sunni Imam. But even in high school, working in a Cappadocia region tourist shop during summers, he began to ask important questions that would shape his scholarly and practical work for years to come.

Like most Turkish high schoolers, Kenan took a religion course in classical Islam. During summers, he sold handmade pottery and other wares to tourists who flocked to the Cappadocia region to tour, by bus or balloon ride, and to see the

region’s famous cone-shaped rock formations used by early Christians as hideouts.

“I saw people from China, the U.S. and so forth, who had religious symbols on and at the time I was trying to understand what other religions meant,” Kenan said. “I thought, if we are so different from one another, if there is only one God, what is this?”

**“I wasn’t active in interreligious dialogue, but I was experiencing it in myself.”**

Kenan knew early on that he wanted to be a teacher. He received his bachelors in Islamic Education from Ankara University in 2006. But when studying for his next two degrees, he specifically sought to learn from different theological perspectives.

He earned a master’s in theological studies from a Roman Catholic school, the University



Kenan and Mandalar pose for a photo during one of the trainings / Photo: Kenan Cetinkaya



Kenan teaching IRD to students from the Department of Religious Education at Bozok University / Photo: Kenan Cetinkaya

of St. Thomas in the U.S. city of Houston, Texas. Following that, he studied at Temple University in Philadelphia, Penn. Although Temple is not considered a religious university today, it was founded in 1884 by a Baptist minister. He also took courses at a rabbinical college while studying for his doctorate.

Kenan now teaches at Bozok University's Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, in Yozgat, Turkey, where he's been since 2013.

"When in the U.S., I experienced a different worldview," said Kenan. "I met Christians who were very sincere, very righteous and good-hearted people." Although he wasn't initially active in working toward peaceful coexistence among world faiths, he began to attend conferences and meetings. "I wasn't active in interreligious dialogue, but I was experiencing it in myself," he said.

The KAICIID fellowship made a huge difference for him, by bringing him into contact with people from all across the globe, who could share powerful stories about advancing a culture of peace in the face of religious persecution.

The experience encouraged him. If these individuals, who have lost loved ones and suffered in other ways because of sectarian conflicts, could engage others in this work, then surely he could as well. "If you know how to speak to the heart, you can make good bridges" across religious divides, said Kenan.

Kenan is also a realist who understands that challenges in Turkey's current political climate make the practice and teaching in interreligious dialogue challenging in the short term. Problems such as the refugee crisis, in which tens of thousands of Syrian refugees are using Turkey as

**K**enan Cetinkaya was born in Malatya, Turkey. He holds a BA (2006) in Islamic Education from Ankara University and an MA (2009) in Theological Studies from the University of Saint Thomas, Houston, TX. He earned his PhD (2014) from the Department of Religion, Temple University, Philadelphia, PA. His dissertation title is *Turkish Response to the Christian Call for Dialogue*. And since 2013, he has been working at Bozok University Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, Turkey since 2013. His professional experience in the area of interreligious dialogue started during education in the USA, where he was able to foster dialogue within a number of different platforms. To better learn about Christianity and Judaism, he pursued a Masters' degree in a Catholic seminary and took courses on Judaism in a Rabbinical College during his doctoral degree. His motto is "success through challenges." He is the editor of a Turkish book, *Birlikte Yađama Kùltùrù ve Diyalog (Coexistence and Dialogue)*, published in December 2014. Some of his other published works include: "Three Turkish Views of Interfaith Dialogue" in *Sacred Texts & Human Contexts: A North American Response to A Common Word between Us and You*, edited by Nathan R. Kollar and Muhammad Shafiq, 2014; Cetinkaya, Kenan: "The Importance of Dialogue in Turkey," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 50 (2015), 167-173

## MEET THE FELLOWS

a gateway to western Europe, have led to proposed solutions that are sociological and economic in nature - putting IRD on a lower priority. Even the phrase “interfaith dialogue” is suspicious in Turkey, because of its ambiguous implications rooted in recent socio-political developments.

The KAICIID Fellows Programme inspired Kenan in recognizing that the inclusion of interreligious relations is the only way some of these issues will ever be resolved.

“I was reading about IRD as a theory or as an academic work, but I didn’t think that if I lost my brother in a civil war, that I could go on and dialogue with other people.” Inspired, he decided to join the other KAICIID Fellows in saying, “OK, let’s build something.”

For his Fellow’s project, Kenan is creating a book aimed at Turkish scholars and students. His book aims to encourage Turkish scholars and students from divergent religious and cultural backgrounds; to equip them with the necessary knowledge about the global character of the interreligious dialogue movement; and to translate into Turkish prominent declarations signed by International Muslim majority organizations.



## TURKEY

Like some other Fellows’ projects, the book helps counter incomplete narratives, so that Turkish Muslims can better understand the growing worldwide commitment to interreligious dialogue by Muslim scholars and organizations.

By having a sourcebook about interreligious dialogue, the readers will be able to learn that IRD is not the monopoly of any one religious group.

“People understand that the Turkish people have big problems of trust in the West. We had a rich cultural history about Abrahamic faiths. People didn’t destroy them, but after the trauma of World War II, people’s understanding of dialogue is different,” said Kenan.

The book’s purpose is to present the key works in ways that scholars and others can study them directly, free of any political assumptions. This way people can judge the statements about IRD and coexistence for themselves. “I say, let’s look at it,” said Kenan. Then people can decide for themselves: “Is it good or not?”



After meeting on the plane that would take them to the first training in Vienna, Kenan and Sayyed Ali became very close friends / Photo: Kenan Cetinkaya



Kenan spoke about the need for IRD in Turkey during his presentation at the Fellows graduation ceremony / Photo: KAICIID



# DEVELOPING IRD IN TURKEY THROUGH TRANSLATING INTERNATIONAL DECLARATIONS AND DOCUMENTS INTO TURKISH

March 2016 - February 2017

**A**mid the misinformation, misconceptions and prejudices through mass media and the press about interreligious and intercultural dialogue, this project is an initiative to equip Turkish scholars and interfaith groups with the necessary knowledge about the global character of the IRD movement, by translating into Turkish prominent declarations signed by international Muslim-majority organizations. The focus is to provide necessary and convincing materials to Turkish readers, showing how Muslims all around the world have been engaging and supporting IRD through emphasizing declarations such as Muslim-Christian Covenant (2001), Mecca Declaration (2008), Common Word Initiative (2008), Joint Interreligious Declaration on Peace Building, Democracy and Development (2014), Athens Declaration (2015) and Marrakesh Declaration (2016).

## OBJECTIVES

**1** To provide a source-book about international Muslim IRD initiatives for scholars at the Turkish universities and interfaith groups

**2** To promote the international characteristics of the IRD movement and to show well-rounded Muslim participations in dialogue around the world

**3** To raise awareness on the challenges and promises of religious diversity

## OUTPUTS

Due to recent sensitive developments, the Turkish term for coexistence (*birlikte yasama*) is referred for the title of the book, instead of ambiguous and partly negative perception of IRD (*dinlerarası diyalog*). In order to clarify the ambiguity, the book provides a comprehensive introductory chapter that discusses the history and development of IRD in the Islamic world and Turkey.

## IMPACTS

- Readers learn more about the global character of IRD with positive and critical perspectives.
- Turkish Muslims have enhanced understanding about the growing worldwide engagement and commitment with IRD by Muslim scholars and organizations.
- Readers develop their knowledge of dialogue and critical thinking.
- Turkish people understand that IRD is not under the monopoly of a particular group; rather, it is a still developing movement at the hand of followers of different Muslim communities.



## MESSAGES FOR KENAN



“ Kenan, when I first saw you we did not talk too much to one other but now, month after month, we have great conversations even though we come from different faiths, families, countries, etc. I still remember what you said about your religion, your country, your occupation and your culture. For example, when you said that my clothes were very nice and that you have to pay for your clothes. But for the Buddhist monk it is not possible to wear fashionable clothes - this is why I got cultural awareness from you and why I did the project to promote peace and harmony by understanding different cultures. ”

Ven. Mandalara Lankara



“ Kenan Cetinkaya is an easy going, soft spoken and principled gentleman. I met him during the KIFP as a colleague in the programme and we really got along very well, maybe because of his simple and gentle nature. I learnt so much from Kenan, especially the ease and carefulness with which he approaches issues. He is highly educated (a PhD holder), yet doesn't bluff or make show. I believe that his educational level, faith, work exposure and openness to new learning has contributed in shaping and moulding him into a more balanced socialised person he is. And I am sure that our programme as KAICIID International Fellows has prepared and positioned him better as a well-seasoned Ambassador of Dialogue and Peacebuilder. I wish him success in all his future endeavours. Bravo, my secret admirer and do pray for me please. ”

Rev. Sr. Agatha Chikelue



“ The first person I met from the Fellows was a gentleman with whom I had the pleasure to sit on the airplane, very polite and with a smile on his face which added to his prestige. Kenan is the name, a brother with whom I had the pleasure to spend my break, open minded and great young teacher. I pray for his family, their safety and health as they are expecting a baby soon. ”

Sayyed Ali Khoei



“ Kenan is not my first Turkish friend - I met some friends from Turkey when I was doing my first degree in 1993 - but he is different from some of the Turkish persons that I have met. He is friendly and has a smiling face. When I first met him I could feel that he was a kind person towards others and helpful to others as well. As KAICIID Fellows we spent some time together discussing various issues in IRD and general topics. He is a knowledgeable person and is ready to listen to others. I am happy to be a KAICIID Fellows and to know him so that I can work with him in the near future. ”

Kriya Langputeh

“ Kenan, for being the most humble person I have known, for keeping a constant smile even when others could be hitting the roof, for your patience during the most disliked thing - coming along as I window shop - thank you. Kenan, thank you for teaching to be more humble though that is too hard for me still. I am more outspoken and kind of loud! I will try! ”

Nageeba Hassan



# Yusuf Daud

Languages: Bahasa Indonesia, Javanese, Sundanese, English, Arabic, Italian  
 Religious Affiliation: Islam  
 Institutional Type: Religious  
 Organizations: SophiaCitra Institute  
 PhiloSufi Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue  
 Expertise: Islamic Mysticism, Comparative Religion, Business Ethics, Interreligious Dialogue  
 Country: Indonesia  
 City: Surabaya and Jakarta

## “WHEN I AM RELIGIOUS, I HAVE TO BE INTERRELIGIOUS”

Our goal, the thing at the top of the mountain is the same thing,” KAICIID Fellow, Yusuf Daud, paused and pointed upward toward the ceiling of the Jakarta Sufi Centre, a pyramid painted a deep black that ran from the base of the room along four perpendicular edges sloping toward the apex in the centre. According to Yusuf, the peak of the pyramid represents the universal goals that are shared by all religions. “If we understand our religions and what they are teaching, there will be no fighting between us. From the top we can see everything differently.”

Yusuf conducts IRD activities and teaches “interreligiousness” throughout Indonesia, both in

urban and rural settings. In his lectures at the Sufi Centre in Jakarta and other religious settings, he focuses on interreligious topics such as the values of fasting and how its virtues are celebrated by other religions. He believes that understanding these commonalities is key to being a religious person.

“When I am religious, I have to be interreligious,” Yusuf said. “I am a religious person, so when I am a religious person or educator, I am obliged - in terms of Islam - I must become interreligious.”

**“I will spread the interfaith dialogue, not only in terms of formalities, but also in daily life to everyone in the world, as an ambassador for Islam.”**

Through his Fellows Project, he brought together religious leaders and educators from moderate Buddhist, Catholic, Hindu, Kebatinan, Kejawen, Muslim, and Protestant groups in Central Java

to facilitate mutual understanding and work against inflexible mindsets and interreligious misunderstandings. In this IRD event, the participants watched a film together and talked about its religious implications. They will continue to meet once a month and use social media to share experiences to overcome suspicion and difficulties in Central Java between different religious groups.

Yusuf is an accomplished scholar in Islamic teaching and also promotes and organizes dialogue between Christians and Muslims. Like the other Fellows, he is one of the world's leading IRD practitioners who joined the KAICIID Fellows Programme seeking further training and development. Yusuf has taken it upon himself to work against religious radicalism and intolerance, not with brute force, but with wisdom and willingness to address the root causes of these problems through different IRD methods. The intellectual, moral, spiritual and social values that he gained from the training have become his model for religious pluralism and harmony. "It was an epiphany," he exclaimed. "I also learned from KAICIID, when they did the capacity building, that I should pay more attention to the details – detailed questions and detailed teachings about religion – then give comments. If I have nothing to comment, then I don't say anything."

Through interacting with the other Fellows, Yusuf learned about thinking beyond his training and his own teachings and the importance of listening and being open to teachings that may even be contradictory to his own. He has found these practices to be crucial in conducting and mediating dialogues that could turn into debates.

Yusuf has also encountered many challenges throughout his dialogue in Indonesia, a country home to 200 different local and world religions, and has been host to several interreligious



Yusuf has published four books on religion and has taught at various universities in Indonesia. In the photo, he presents his initiative to the Fellows / Photo: KAICIID

Yusuf Daud earned his first scholarship for a Master of Science from the University of Indonesia in the International Affairs Middle East and Islamic Department in 2005 and his second for a Master of Philosophy and Islamic Mysticism from ICAS London in 2006. He has published four books on religion, including *Unveiling the Taste of Hidden Things*, on the meeting point of Islam and Christianity and *Membenahi Sikap Beragama kita* (A bridge across spiritually and religion). Yusuf has taught at various Universities and Catholic Seminaries in Jakarta, Surabaya, Bandung, Banten and is a visiting Lecturer on Islamic Mysticism, interreligious dialogue, spiritual and emotional marketing and business ethics. In 2008, he became the first Muslim Scholar from Southeast Asia to win the Nostra Aetate Pontifical Council of Interfaith Dialogue Scholarship from the Vatican to study world religious traditions at three prestigious universities in Rome. Yusuf is a leading expert on Islamic Mysticism, Islamic Thought, Interfaith Dialogue, and Comparative Mysticism. Professionally affiliated with Ibn Arabi Society, ICRP (Indonesian Conference on Religion and Peace), and an Activist of Interfaith dialogue nationally and internationally, his popular workshops combine his expertise in interreligious understanding with his Sufi training. He lives in Surabaya, the second largest city in Indonesia, with his beloved wife and three children. Yusuf has a deep commitment to interfaith dialogue and believes that in today's diverse world, it is essential to understand and work with religions beyond one's own.

## MEET THE FELLOWS

conflicts. There is also a growing movement of religious exclusion in the country and he has also worked with people who wanted to learn more about IRD, but were coming from narrow-minded or inflexible educational backgrounds.

Ultimately, he hopes exploring religious differences through IRD will stimulate respect and esteem for spiritual life and allow people to make compassion a part of their lives.

“I will spread the interfaith dialogue, not only in terms of formalities, but also in daily life to everyone in the world, as an ambassador for Islam.”

Yusuf reflected quietly for a moment. “Once you step, let God do the rest.”



INDONESIA



Yusuf lecturing on the interreligious elements of fasting, at the Sufi Centre of Jakarta / Photo: KAICIID



# TRAINING WORKSHOPS IN SURABAYA AND TULUNGAGUNG

27 September - 14 November 2015

**T**o KAICIID Fellow Yusuf Daud, interreligious and intercultural dialogue is intrinsically connected to education and peace, and he believes that there is no world peace if there is no peace among religions. He believes that interreligious dialogue is important to reveal the narrow mindsets that hinder relationships. These mindsets can easily trigger misunderstandings. Misunderstanding can lead to prejudice, which is counterproductive to the interreligious relationship itself.

While the desire to safeguard religious harmony exists in many parts of Indonesia, Yusuf concentrated his project's resources on the city of Surabaya, as well as in Tulungagung, where the training was hosted by Faculty of Ushuluddin, Letters, and Dakwah State Institute for Islamic Studies. The workshops focused on empowering these communities to work together towards promoting pluralism in every aspect of daily life and building peace through interreligious and intercultural dialogue.

## OBJECTIVES

**1** To promote mutual understanding and work against inflexible mindsets to mitigate interreligious misunderstandings

**2** To sensitise participants on pluralism and dialogue techniques

**3** To raise the participants' awareness of the challenges facing the Province of Central - East Java

**4** To give participants a clearer understanding of the causes and potential areas of intolerance

## TARGET GROUP

His project brought together religious leaders and educators from moderate Buddhist, Catholic, Hindu, Muslim, Protestant, as well as Kebatinan and Kejawen groups in Central Java. The sessions combined both theoretical and applied work, aiming to build their capacity and knowledge in interreligious dialogue.

## OUTPUTS

In the process, participants gained skills critical for working together to address interfaith community needs. The process of building communication by bringing together leaders and educators was an important aspect of the workshops. The participants benefited from capacity building activities as well as from networking with each other and sharing personal experiences.

## IMPACTS

The participants hope that such an initiative will be sustained, as this forum can motivate and stimulate concrete efforts by bringing together people from different backgrounds to work together to overcome various problems. Yusuf reflected: "In terms of Sufism - my end is my beginning - this is not the end. It has been my dream to become part of a programme like this. I prayed for an opportunity to learn more and I got this opportunity."

## MESSAGES FOR YUSUF



“ Bapak Yusuf Daud and I come from the same region. He is from Indonesia and I am from Thailand, but we share the (almost) same language, same culture and same IRD ideas. He is a kind person, knowledgeable and understanding. We had the chance to share experiences and ideas with him throughout the year. He is an important person in his community and I learned a lot from him. I am really confident that as the Fellow from the same region, I can work closely with him. ”

Kriya Langputeh



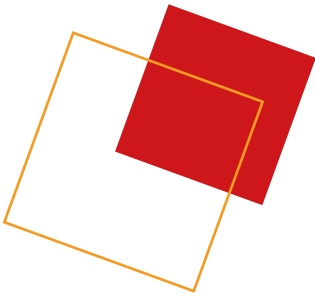
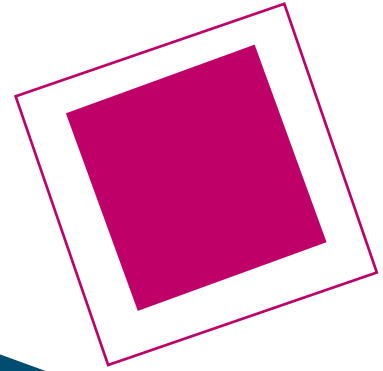
“ I associate him with love. Love in its purest form. Whenever he speaks or writes something, he mentions the word love; love for all people apart from their faith or ethnic group. We received very lovely stories from him via Whatsapp. I like the way he conceives his religiosity. I enjoyed the time when we discussed things together. He is very a reasonable and very sensitive person. Whenever I think about the difficult situation of our Muslim World, I wish we had many Muslim brothers and sisters like Yusuf. ”

Mabrouka Rayachi

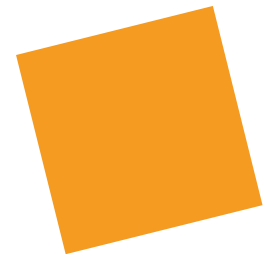


“ You are a great educator, Yusuf. I have learned a lot from what you share. Information is power and you are a very powerful person anywhere in the world. I like your flexibility and it teaches me that unless we are flexible, we will never allow ourselves to learn from and/or about others. That makes interreligious and intercultural dialogue possible. Thank you for agreeing to go shopping with me. That was very kind of you, even when we knew that the shops were closed! ”

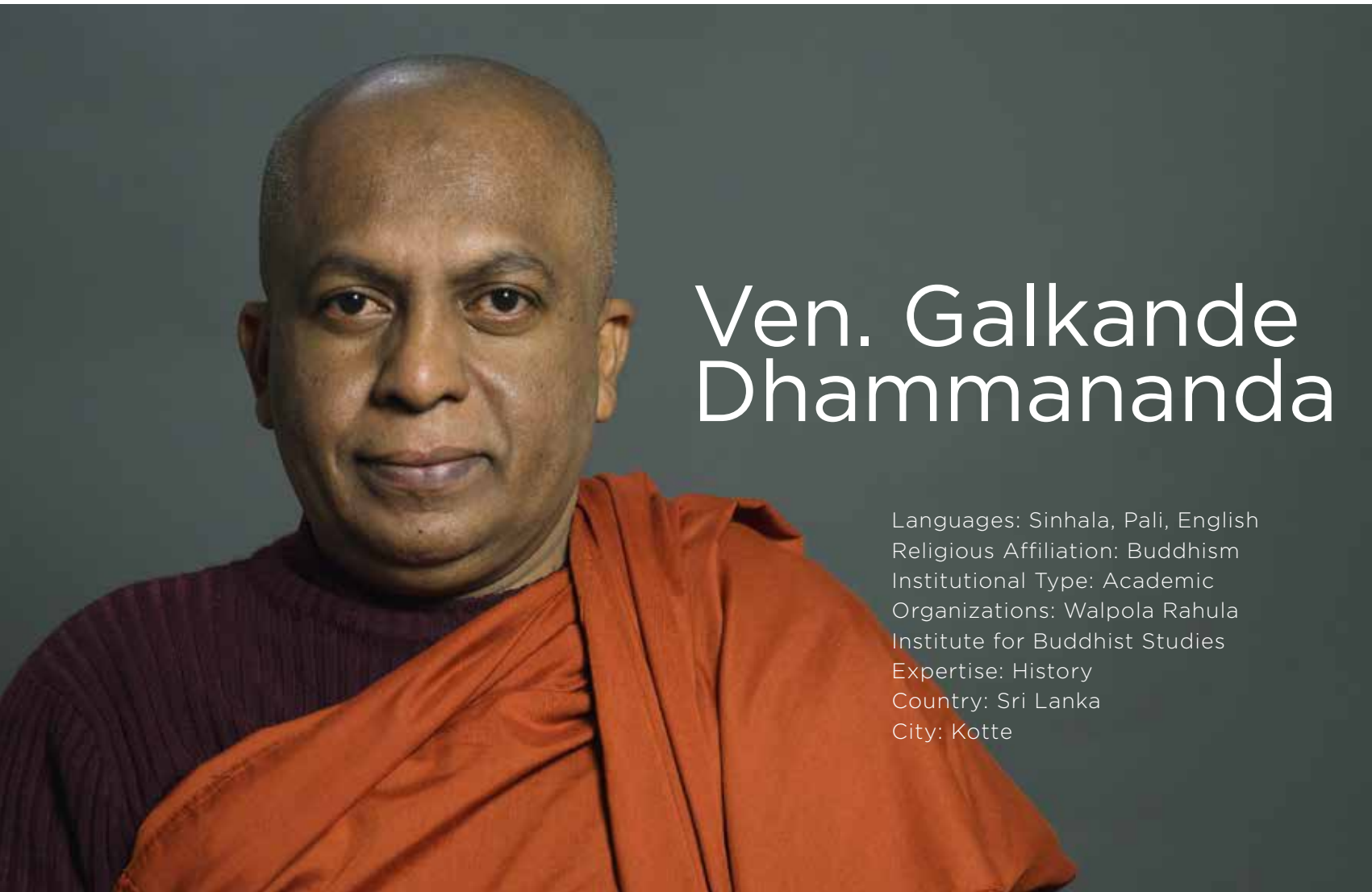
Nageeba Hassan



**COMMUNITY LEADERS AND  
RELIGIOUS EDUCATORS  
ARE SOME OF THE MOST  
IMPORTANT ACTORS IN  
PROMOTING PEACE AND  
RELIGIOUS PLURALISM  
THROUGH INTERRELIGIOUS  
EDUCATION.**







# Ven. Galkande Dhammananda

Languages: Sinhala, Pali, English  
Religious Affiliation: Buddhism  
Institutional Type: Academic  
Organizations: Walpola Rahula Institute for Buddhist Studies  
Expertise: History  
Country: Sri Lanka  
City: Kotte

## “NOW, I SEE THAT HERE WE ARE THE SAME PEOPLE - ALL TRYING TO BRING LOVE.”

**T**oday, the lush tropical mountains, tea plantations, waterfalls and coastlines on the island nation of Sri Lanka radiate a calming sense of awe.

Hidden from sight, however, are the physical and mental scars of a remnant from a bloody civil war that lasted more than 25 years and that left more than 100,000 people dead.

Venerable Galkande Dhammananda, a Buddhist monk born and raised in Sri Lanka, lived much of his life in a country at war; his oldest brother even died in the conflict. But when the war ended in 2009, Dhammananda and others worked hard at reconciliation talks aimed at bringing the warring ethnic Tamil and Sinhalese groups together. Even before becoming a KAICIID Fellow, Dhammananda used social media such as Youtube to encourage

his fellow Sri Lankans to engage in social harmony and peace across ethnic divides.

Dhammananda's interest in social justice and cohesion was a natural outgrowth of his Theravada Buddhist faith. The Buddha taught the concept of “Bahujana Hitaya,” which says people should look beyond differences to help those who are vulnerable.

For this Buddhist monk, it wasn't until Buddhist and Muslim aggressions arose anew in recent years that he was compelled toward reconciliation work that centered on interreligious dialogue. The past two years, a few radical Buddhist monks have been preaching about the dangers of Islam, some actively on social media.

As a professor of Buddhist history, Dhammananda knew the violence espoused by a handful of radicals

did not fit with the Buddhist teachings and scriptures he taught. "I see a kind of paradox, so one thing is to highlight this contrast, this paradox... As a Buddhist monk, I have gone into deep teaching of Buddhism and I don't find a single thing that says you can use violence as an answer."

Dhammananda said becoming a KAICIID Fellow allowed him to add new strategies that could expand the power of his work in reconciliation of ethnic differences.

"People are thinking like Tamils, like Sinhalese," said Dhammananda, referring to the two main ethnic groups in Sri Lanka. His hope is that instead of separate ethnic and religious identities, that people will unite in the notion of a single Sri Lankan identity. "Toward that end, this (interreligious dialogue) is a tool."

"Because we were under colonial rule, from the time I was a child, I learned that Christianity came with the invader," Dhammananda

said, referring to Britain's rule over Sri Lanka from 1815 to 1948. "But when I started to work with other religious people, particularly in this project, I met a very nice Catholic priest. At the end of the KAICIID Fellows project, I said that I had met a brother and that I didn't feel any difference. That is the difference I feel now."

**"The way I look at interreligious dialogue, is by taking the Buddha as an example. Buddha did not convert anyone to his religion."**



Ven. Dhammananda works to bring peace and reconciliation to his country, Sri Lanka. In the photo, he participates in one of the guided tours in Kuala Lumpur / Photo: KAICIID

"Maybe earlier I would have said that here is a Buddhist, and there is a Christian. Now, I see that here we are the same people - all trying to bring love."

Dhammananda said the goal of his KAICIID Fellows project, called the Rahula Dialogue

and held in Fall 2015, was to help the participants, who represented several major world faiths, to have a safe space to practice interreligious dialogue and to improve collaborations with each other. He also sought to strengthen relationships among the partner organizations, as they focused on building social cohesion.

The Venerable Galkande Dhammananda Thero is a Sri Lankan national and a monk of Theravada Buddhist tradition. After completing monastic training, Dhammananda joined the University of Kelaniya and received his B.A. Degree in History. After winning the Commonwealth Scholarship in 2003 he completed his Masters and M. Phil degrees at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, India and is now reading for his PhD. Dhammananda heads the Walpola Rahula Institute for Buddhist Studies, where educational and training programmes are offered for religious leaders and lay persons with an aim to support social healing. He is a full-time lecturer attached to the Department of History, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka. Dhammananda is actively engaged in issues related to social justice and harmony that promote an inclusive plural society. He has been actively using social media to propagate the message of non-violence during recent interreligious and interethnic conflicts in Sri Lanka. Over the years he has been in dialogue with religious leaders on issues related to social justice and healing and wishes to support others to enter into similar dialogues. He is inspired by the Buddha's teaching of 'Bahujana Hitaya' (for the betterment of all) calling for one to work beyond religious, ethnic or social labels to actively uplift society - especially supporting those who are vulnerable, marginalised and discriminated against.

## MEET THE FELLOWS

For the Sri Lankan participants, they acknowledged what KAICIID and the Fellows have already known: That when people from several faiths meet, share concerns, it allows them to minimize misunderstandings and reduce their fears.

Although it took patience and persistence to build trust among the group of Christians, Hindus, Muslims and Buddhists who attended the Rahula Dialogue, Dhammananda said the effort gave people confidence and hope toward continuing interreligious dialogue and building upon it.

Participants praised the progress they made toward overcoming inaccurate stereotypes about other religions and erasing the distrust that can be a barrier against reconciliation and peaceful coexistence.

As is the case of other KAICIID Fellows, Dhammananda's commitment toward interreligious dialogue does not weaken his own faith, but rather emerges from it. The Buddha himself met other religious leaders in his time, noted the religious historian.

"The way I look at interreligious dialogue, is by taking the Buddha as an example. Buddha did not convert anyone to his religion," Dhammananda said.

"He always emphasised that we should continue to support the religion that you are following and do not say that this is the only true religion and the other false," Dhammananda said.

**"As a Buddhist monk, I have gone into deep teaching of Buddhism and I don't find a single thing that says you can use violence as an answer."**

As a professor of Buddhist history at the University of Kelaniya, Dhammananda directs a centre named for his mentor, Walpola Rahula, the first monk who pursued a Western education. The centre was already known as moving beyond single-faith services; it teaches meditation to children of any faith, although most are

Buddhist, the faith of about 70 percent of the Sri Lankan population.

Professionally, Dhammananda is

the process of completing his doctoral degree. He won a prestigious scholarship in 2003 to attend Jawaharlal Nehru University in India, where he earned his Masters degrees.

Dhammananda is optimistic about future interreligious work in his country.

For example, he notes that a local interreligious group hopes to engage participants of the Rahula Dialogue in a one-day interreligious dialogue seminar at the University of Kelaniya, located in suburban Colombo. Although initially it was a challenge to get the participants together, the result was a commitment toward meaningful interreligious work going forward, including among partner organizations that share a desire to heal decades of distrust and violence.



During the graduation ceremony, Ven. Dhammananda meets and shares experiences with a 2016 KAICIID Hindu Fellow from Sri Lanka / Photo: KAICIID

# RAHULA DIALOGUE: AN INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE PROGRAMME ON SOCIAL HEALING

September - October 2015

Ven. Galkande Dhammananda Thero's project was designed to develop a sustained dialogue among lay and religious leaders affiliated with the four main religious groups in Sri Lanka: Buddhists, Christians, Hindus and Muslims. By working together to address community problems, religious leaders and activists can strengthen their bonds with colleagues from other religions. However, Dhammananda admitted that the implementation of the project was a challenging experience. "Although, it wasn't easy, we managed to have a satisfactory number of participants by constant communication with different stakeholders. Furthermore, building trust among participants was a challenge which facilitators creatively overcame through various tools and community building activities."

## OBJECTIVES

1

To provide a safe platform to practice dialogue

2

To build deeper understanding and enhance collaboration among participants and facilitators

3

To strengthen institutional relationships among partner organizations focusing on social healing

## OUTPUTS

The training provided participants with the opportunity to meet and interact with leaders of other religions, to exchange points of view and foster good will between different religious communities. Feedback from the participants indicated that through interaction and acquaintance with differences, they minimised misunderstanding and reduced their fears. One Muslim participant pointed out that such initiatives help people to overcome misperceptions about other religions. Another Christian participant reported that the training helped her to build an understanding and appreciation for other religions. Some participants revealed that this training gave them the opportunity to interact for the first time with people from certain religious backgrounds. However, an ongoing concern is the need to maintain productive relationships among the participants. "We aim to ensure sustainability of the programme through periodical joint meetings, supporting each other's programmes and encouraging small-scale initiatives on interreligious dialogue." Nevertheless, relevant follow-up and future projects were carefully planned. A first step will be the implementation of a one-day interreligious dialogue seminar at the University of Kelaniya by participants of the training.

## IMPACTS

Reflecting on his participation in KIFP, Ven. Dhammananda stated that "Being able to design and implement my own initiative on dialogue is what I have gained from the KAICIID Fellows Programme. I am optimistic that I will be able to introduce a new course on dialogue in my university and in the Walpola Rahula Institute. However, I expect guidance from KAICIID and from my colleagues from KIFP in that endeavour." Furthermore, he is grateful to have had the opportunity to work closely with such a strong group of peacemakers from all over the world through this programme and develop a strong bond with them.

## MESSAGES FOR DHAMMANANDA



“ He is calmness itself. I sometimes wish for such calmness in the stressful situations I encounter in my daily life. I appreciate his meetings. I think he is a professional teacher, and while discussing he is a good listener. In Malaysia I had the opportunity to learn from him more about his religion and tradition. That has broadened my own perspective to see things and made me curious to learn more. ”

Mabrouka Rayachi




“ Venerable Galkande Dhammananda Thero is another gentleman from our KAICIID International Fellows Programme that I so much admire. I respect so much the depth of his wisdom, his experience in peacebuilding and the manner in which he approaches issues. His work in social justice, harmony and with the marginalised in his country, Sri Lanka, have challenged me to do more for my community in Nigeria. Venerable Galkande is a true leader by profession who does not need to exert unnecessary force on himself by trying to be who he is not. He is a man of few words but great wisdom. I may not be as gentle as you, Venerable Galkande, in my dealings with issues because we are all very unique in our various ways but just know that you are one of those whose life and work inspired me so much during our KIFP and please keep me in your prayers. ”

Rev. Sr. Agatha Chikelue



“ Dhammananda is the nicest person you could ever meet. He is a peaceful human being and I hope that he achieves his goals in building peace. ”

Nourah Alhasawi



**DIALOGUE, BOTH INTER- AND INTRA-RELIGIOUS IS KEY TO BRIDGING YAWNING GAPS BETWEEN COMMUNITIES AND INDIVIDUALS. IT TRANSFORMS PREJUDICES AND MISCONCEPTIONS INTO MUTUAL APPRECIATION AND ACCEPTANCE.**



## Rev. Alexander Goldberg

Languages: English  
Religious Affiliation: Judaism  
Institutional Type: Academic  
Organizations: University of Surrey  
Expertise: Community Development,  
Education  
Country: United Kingdom  
City: London

### “ARMING US WITH TOOLS AND GIVING US A NETWORK OF PEOPLE WHO ARE LIKE-MINDED”

**T**o understand how Alexander Goldberg became immersed in interreligious dialogue work, you might need a map. And a time machine.

The journey begins with Lithuanian Jews who intended to emigrate from their home to the United States more than a century ago. They wound up stopping along the way and calling Ireland home. Part of his family settled in Cork and called southern Ireland home. Like other Jews in that part of Ireland, they were dubbed “Catholic Jews,” referencing the dominant faith in southern Ireland. The rest of his family settled in Belfast, Northern Ireland, where northern Jews were called “Protestant Jews.”

When Ireland’s fight for independence from Britain tore the nation into two, his family wound up on different sides. Although they shared an identity,

they nonetheless embraced opposing sides of a war, Protestant Jews versus Catholic Jews.

Deeply influenced by both the conflict and his own family’s subsequent involvement in peace movements, the 41-year-old grew up hearing stories regarding conflict and raising questions he’s been trying to answer ever since.

Alex has been an interreligious activist leader since his formative years. As early as age 18, he was selected to visit the House of Lords as a representative of the Council of Christians and Jews, the nation’s oldest interreligious group.

Today, he serves in several high level roles having advised the Mayor of London and the British Prime Minister on faith issues and chaired the Faiths Forum for London he is well-known observer and commentator on religious and

human rights issues. It was in his role as a chaplain and instigator of interreligious work at the University of Surrey that made him an ideal person to be part of the KAICIID International Fellows Programme.

“I was brought up that people are special and it upsets me to see people who have shared common values build walls around them and as I’ve grown up, the walls have gotten higher and higher,” said Alex.

He sees interreligious dialogue and peacebuilding as a key to improving how diverse people relate and live going forward. “It’s agreeing on shared values and agreeing on differences—and that’s the difficult bit,” said Alex.

For his KAICIID Fellows project, Alex planned a network of 10 young religious leaders in Surrey, hoping to replicate the experiences of the KAICIID Fellows Programme, in order to build an interreligious network in his hometown of Surrey. In Surrey, a region of verdant rolling hills southeast of London, the university’s diversity is reflected among the many international students, among others. That religious and ethnic pluralism creates strong contrasts with the historically working class and predominantly Christian permanent residents of the town of Guildford, the capital of Surrey.

**“If you look at some of the steps people have taken - from where they were to where they are now, you can’t help go, ‘wow’. It’s an amazing transformation.”**



KAICIID Director General, Fahad Abualnasr, and Rev. Goldberg during the Fellows graduation ceremony / Photo: KAICIID

Alex targeted seminarians and religious educators as participants, in order to help them learn about each other’s faiths, and to teach them the theories and practicalities of interreligious dialogue. His goal is long-lasting coalitions and life-

long relationships among those who participated: Muslims, Catholics, Anglicans, Hindus, Buddhists and Jews. The Surrey-based programme provides mentoring, community relationship building, and coalition building to help participants forge their own programmes.

“What’s really important is that the university has taken this piece of work extremely seriously,”

**R**ev. Alexander Goldberg is a Chaplain, an advisor on intercultural, interreligious and community relations and Chief of Heritage at the United Synagogue. He has set up training programmes for faith leaders and communal professionals working in the fields of community development, international development and social action. He served as the Chief Executive of the London Jewish Forum. He is the Jewish Chaplain to the University of Surrey and was a Chaplain to the Olympic and Paralympic Games. He is Chair of the Football Association’s Faith Reference Group and oversaw the completion of both football guides to Ramadan and Tishri that were sent out to 30,000 professionals and one million supporters. He was appointed co-chair of the Faith Forum for London in 2011. In this role he set up the Mayor of London’s Faith Conference, partnering with McKinseys to create a faith leaders programme. He also established the Shared Futures faith school linking programme. The UK Prime Minister invited him to the national football and racism summit. He headed up the 2012 Hours Against Hate European coalition which won prestigious recognition from International Olympic Peace Truce Committee and the US Secretary of State. He served on two Ministerial steering groups at the Department for Education and was a member of the HEFCE University Religious Literacy Group. He is an advisor to the UK Government on a major community grant programme and regularly contributes to television, radio, online and print media. Motto: “I will trust and not be afraid” “דחפא אלו חטבא”



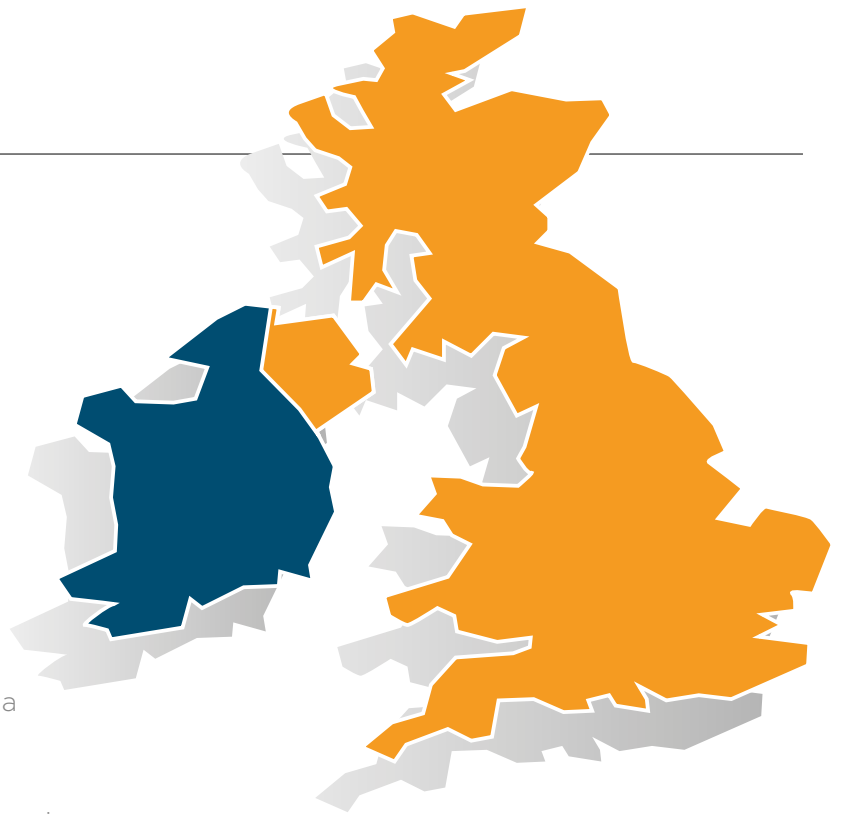
## MEET THE FELLOWS

said Alex. Administration leaders are especially excited and they hope to build a significant endowment to support the work with the larger community.

He also seeks to build a link between a community that thrives economically and those that do not—specifically, businesses that embrace diversity and strive to make their employees feel welcome in Surrey are more likely to keep their employees. Alex believes a welcoming and religiously informed community is a better community for all.

Alex's résumé is long and full of impressive interreligious work. He's spoken twice to United Nations meetings on human rights matters. He initiated an Auschwitz study tour for his university and ten years ago worked to assure the university hired the country's first interreligious officer.

The BBC has him as a panellist on television and has developed a regular radio slot under the name, "The Rabbi School Diaries". Goldberg is known for working outside the typical confines of most interreligious work in creative and visionary ways.



### UNITED KINGDOM

He was an official Jewish chaplain during London's 2012 Summer Olympics. As chair of the Football Association's Faith Reference Group in 2014, he oversaw the completion of football guides about the Muslim month of fasting called Ramadan and the Jewish month of Tishrei, in which several Jewish holidays occur. The guides were sent out to 30,000 professionals and one million supporters.

Despite wearing several hats that keep him frantically busy—he answers questions at breakneck speed—Alex is never out of ideas. A future goal is for the University of Surrey to build a multireligious chaplaincy, which is rare in the United Kingdom.

He's realistic as to the time it takes to tear down walls, build bridges between communities and to develop religious literacy.

"There are difficult parts of scriptures. Most religions have both inclusive and exclusive texts," Goldberg said. "What's nice about KAICIID's network is that it's arming us with tools and a network of people who are like minded. People who are very strong in their religious identities".

"They're not weak and watery about their religious convictions and yet they still want to interact and develop community relations," he added. "If you look at some of the steps people have made—from where they were to where they are now, you can't help go, 'wow'. It's an amazing transformation."



In February 2016, when Austrian Federal President Dr. Heinz Fischer visited the Centre, Rev. Goldberg had the opportunity to greet him. He also spoke at Salzburg Global Seminars as a KAICIID Panelist / Photo: KAICIID



## SURREY IRD COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

January - December 2016

**R**everend Alexander Goldberg's project was the Development Stage of an Interreligious Dialogue Social and Community Development Programme at the University of Surrey, in which he plans to develop a permanent working group and education programme on interreligious dialogue for Seminarians in southern England. The project was to develop a full programme for seminarians, newly qualified clergy and religious educators ensuring gender and age balance from at least four distinct faiths.

### OBJECTIVES

**1** To learn more about the other

**2** To understand the benefit of collaboration on common social issues

**3** To develop common social programmes together with the support of Surrey Faiths Link and the University of Surrey

**4** To build the faculty, launch event and develop the course (and materials)

### OUTPUTS

In the months following the start of the programme, the project developed a programme in conjunction with Surrey Faith Links, Anglican Diocese of Guildford, St John's (Wonersh) Catholic Seminary, Surrey Muslim Association, the University of Surrey and Surrey Multifaith Centre. It will produce a course for seminarians from Catholic, Jewish, Anglican and Muslim Colleges in Surrey, Sussex and London as well as the newly ordained within the same area.

### RESULTS

The programme is now designed to get individuals to develop meaningful partnerships for a generation to come. If successful, the project partners have agreed to help fund this as an ongoing concern in the future. Recruitment is nearing completion. The project is to develop the programme and the necessary links. The project has now built a programme, recruited two Catholics, two Muslims, four Anglicans and one Jew to attend the course. Additional outcomes include the links that have sparked off initiatives: a new social enterprise on faith literacy; a joint project to help refugees in Calais (Anglican-Jewish-Muslim) and a strengthened faith presence on campus. One of these initiatives made the UK press.

### IMPACTS

"The KIFP and KAICIID connection gave this programme gravitas and enabled doors to be opened," Alex said. "Linking to other KAICIID Fellows enabled an exchange of ideas, the development of resources and know-how. It gave our team at Surrey the confidence to carry this out. Thank you KAICIID. You made the lives of one million people living here in our county better."

## MESSAGES FOR ALEXANDER



“ Alex is a dear friend to me. He is very generous and always invites us to join him as he eats. Despite the fact that he does not have an abundance of the food that meets his religious standards, he openly and graciously offers it to us. I admire his attentiveness to small details. He has a high capacity for analysis and synthesis. He respects and appreciates others despite their differences. I am truly affected by his relentless pursuit of peace. He has the ability to invent new ways of gathering people of different faith, race, background, etc. ”

Mohammed Issa Alsheraifin



“ A person full of laughter, great thinker, always busy with great works and a wonderful friend, Alexander is his name. Very friendly and great personality, we shared a lot of stories and we shared a lot of meals together in KAICIID and outside of it. Spent wonderful times and ideas with him on the future work that we can do together, I gained more knowledge of his belief and his interfaith works. Wish him the best and a joyful times in great works. ”

Sayyed Ali Khoei



“ Alex is a very intelligent and humorous man. His strong British accent took some getting used to. As the only Jewish fellow, he has been providing excellent answers for all the questions about Judaism and the Jews. I am grateful to know him and to work together with him. His skills in using social media to promote IRD, especially for networking, are also very inspiring. Please stay connected and make this world better for all, Alex! ”

Wiwin Rohmawati



“ Alex is outgoing and down to earth, and he would offer to help you whenever he could. He is also a good speaker. I did not think before that I would have a Jewish friend but KIFP made it happen after he shared so much about himself and his tradition. ”

Nourah Alhasawi



“ You gave me that opportunity to learn and unlearn about the Jews. So I tried being more than a classmate, making sure to talk to you daily about Kosher rituals and general things which made training in Meadville Lombard much easier. I have learnt not to share any information without cross checking the sources, otherwise we keep hurting people for being irresponsible. This has helped me practice non-violence and become a neutralizer - will ask police if I can be trained as a negotiator for CVE. You are my friend and I feel free talking, asking, walking, joking and dinning with you even at a Jewish restaurant, because dialogue can take place anywhere. We have enjoyed the shocked looks from people who see us together talking freely and happily. This has pushed me to another level in my interreligious work. I have walked into places of worship during prayer time... you should see the looks! Thanks Alex! ”

Nageeba Hassan



# Kriya Langputeh

Languages: English, Malay, Thai, Arabic  
Religious Affiliation: Islam  
Institutional Type: Academic  
Organizations: Fatoni University  
Expertise: Peacebuilding, Comparative Religions  
Country: Thailand  
City: Yala

## “OUR WORK CAN BRING PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE TO PEOPLE ALL OVER THE WORLD”

**B**orn to a Muslim Malay family in southern Thailand, Kriya Langputeh learned the Malay language at home, Thai at primary school, Arabic at Islamic school, and English along the way. He now uses this multilingual mix to conduct interreligious dialogue and heal his fractured community.

Kriya still remembers when Muslims and Buddhists lived in relative harmony along Thailand’s southern border. That peace was shattered in 2004 when local separatists initiated a campaign of sustained violence against the central Thai government. More than a decade later, regional Muslim and Buddhist relations remain tense and tinged with hatred.

“The conflict is rooted in personal interests and ethnopolitical issues, but because one side is Buddhist and the other side is Muslim, religion is being misused,”

Kriya said. “We need to understand each other and get along to overcome our problems. That’s how IRD can help.”

Kriya’s interest in IRD emerged in the late 1990s. After studying at the International Islamic University in Malaysia, he pivoted to a comparative religions degree at Mahidol University in Bangkok.

“In Malaysia, my supervisors, lecturers, most of my friends were all Muslim. By focusing on comparative religions in Bangkok, I had the chance to study with Buddhists, Sikhs, Hindus, and Christians. The tension in my home region gave me an urgent need to learn more about these other faiths. As I studied comparative religions, I realised that I needed to introduce interreligious dialogue to the peacebuilding process for people to get along again.”



When violence took hold in 2004, Kriya returned to southern Thailand to direct the International Language Academy at Fatoni University (then Yala Islamic University) where he now teaches Peace and Conflict Management, Comparative Religions, and Islam and the Way of Life.

From there he began advising the Thai government on how best to prioritise IRD in its peacebuilding efforts. He also helped to establish Interreligious Council for Peace Thailand, a group of Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Sikh and Muslim scholars that organizes international conferences to discuss peace promotion and IRD implementation.

In southern Thailand, fear often blocks these difficult conversations from ever occurring.

“It’s hard to initiate dialogue about this conflict because many locals are afraid to speak about it publicly. Most people don’t want to say that they belong to the government or the insurgency group. It’s too dangerous. They prefer to keep silent.”

Kriya’s KIFP initiative aimed to break this silence, amplifying IRD’s role as a vehicle for peace in the region. His two seminars at Fatoni University in November 2015 brought together more than

500 predominantly Muslim students to discuss the values, rites, moral principles and beliefs of other religions.

“I tried to show my students that we as Muslims must live together with others in peaceful coexistence. The only way to do this is to know people of different faiths.”

**“The KAICIID fellowship was very meaningful to me, but it is just the beginning. We Fellows have to keep working closely together to introduce IRD to our societies. I still believe that our work can bring peaceful coexistence to people all over the world.”**

Kriya introduced students to a Catholic priest from nearby Betong District and several Buddhist and Muslim community leaders in the region. He plans to bring a select group of students on a rare visit to the priest’s seminary later this year.

“Muslims in southern Thailand don’t go to churches. Buddhists don’t go to mosques. Christians don’t go to temples. We don’t mix. If my students go, it might seem strange to others, and they might be afraid, but it will be a very good first step. My students are eager to learn more about Buddhists, Christians, Hindus and Sikhs directly from them, not just from me.”

Kriya plans to develop a specific course on IRD later this year and to expand his initiative beyond the university’s walls. To do that, he’s teaming up with a Buddhist community leader to assemble Muslim and Buddhist neighbours for a joint dialogue project.

**K**riya Langputeh was born on 19 March 1971 in Satun Province, Southern Thailand. He is from a native Malay speaking ethnic group with the majority of the group living in the current three border provinces. As a Thai national, he went to Thai public school where the language of instruction was Thai while he attended a Malay language-based Islamic religious school in the evening and during public holidays. He obtained his first degree in Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences from the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM Malaysia). He also obtained a Master’s Degree in Comparative Religions from Mahidol University in Bangkok in 2000. He currently lives in his hometown and has worked for the Yala Islamic University since 1999. He is also currently working on his PhD research at the University of Brunei Darussalam, funded by the Brunei Sultan Scholarship. His dissertation is titled Interreligious Dialogue: Approaches for Peacebuilding. He is also an active participant in lectures, conferences and seminars, especially in the field of Peace and Conflict Management.

## MEET THE FELLOWS

“The university can serve as a bridge to the community, so we need to work hard to show what IRD can do for our society as a whole. When people come to know IRD concepts and realize their importance, it should be easier for them to get along.”

Although Kriya has worked on IRD for nearly two decades, he credits KAICIID with strengthening his knowledge of theory and best practice in the field. The KIFP helped him introduce key concepts to students and his community and enhanced his credibility and confidence when speaking to new audiences. More importantly, it introduced him to a network of international Fellows he now considers colleagues and friends.

“The other Fellows were all doing great work in their communities, churches, temples and so on. I was most excited to learn from their experiences and to exchange ideas.

If Fellows faced problems in conducting their initiatives, we gave them suggestions. I consulted with many of them, and we helped each other.”

**“The tension in my home region gave me an urgent need to learn more about these other faiths. As I studied comparative religions, I realised that I needed to introduce interreligious dialogue to the peacebuilding process for people to get along again.”**

Kriya interviewed several Fellows about their IRD experiences and how people of different religious backgrounds can live peacefully side-by-side. He uploaded these discussions to Facebook and shared highlights via his class WhatsApp groups to inspire students. Moving

forward, he hopes the Fellows will continue to collaborate and learn from one another.

“The KAICIID Fellowship was very meaningful to me, but it is just the beginning. We Fellows

have to keep working closely together to introduce IRD to our societies. I still believe that our work can bring peaceful coexistence to people all over the world.”



Kriya's Fellows project was a seminar on IRD for 200 students / Photo: Kriya Langputeh



Through the seminar, Kriya aimed to provide the framework for peaceful coexistence in southern Thailand / Photo: Kriya Langputeh

# THE ROLE OF INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE FOR PEACE IN THE SOUTHERN THAILAND CONFLICT

## November 2015

In November 2015, 200 students gathered at the Fatoni University in Southern Thailand for the one-day training seminar “The role of interreligious dialogue for peace in the southern Thailand conflict.” All the participants invited to this seminar attend the course on “Islam and the Way of Life” in several faculties in Thailand. Concepts related to interreligious dialogue and peacebuilding were discussed and analysed. The main aim of this training seminar was to provide the framework for peaceful coexistence in the southern Thailand border provinces and widen the perspectives of youth activists on religion and interreligious dialogue. The concept represented a mixture between the definition of a seminar and a training course. Specifically, it combined the comprehensive inputs and participatory outcomes of a training with the open approach of a seminar.

## OBJECTIVES

- 1** To raise awareness and understanding about IRD among participants
- 2** To develop competencies needed for working on inter-religious dialogue with young people
- 3** To expose participants to the values, rites, moral principles and beliefs of different religions
- 4** To build and enhance relationships among the leaders of religions
- 5** To identify possible short and long term inter-religious dialogue strategies and approaches to resolve the conflict in southern Thailand

## OUTPUTS

The seminar produced a welcoming environment for the participants to affirm key values of coexistence with people from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds. Participants were positive about their capacity to transfer the knowledge back to their respective environments and raised their awareness on the importance of IRD in society, as well as for interpersonal relations. On a personal level, one participant gave an example of how the training affected his interpersonal relations. As he mentioned, conflict between Buddhists and Muslims affected his relationship with a close friend who is a Buddhist. After the seminar, he realised that through dialogue, he could rebuild this friendship and avoid similar incidents in the future.

## IMPACTS

Kriya expressed his appreciation to KAICIID for giving him the opportunity to participate in the KIFP. “I am grateful for the excellent resource persons that trained me so that I can run my own project.” The participants are encouraged to spread activism and support dialogue by their own example and efforts towards the acknowledgement of the necessity of dialogue. “I strongly believe that my project will be the new platform for them to move forward to build peace in the southern Thailand conflict with an IRD approach.”



## MESSAGES FOR KRIYA



“ Kriya is the kind of person who would do everything in their power to make sure that the others are comfortable. Most of the Muslims in his country, and the whole region as well, are in a very difficult situation and I believe that it is so hard for a nice person such as himself to see all of that without being able to do much about it. Therefore, I hope that participation in this programme, KIFP, has given him a greater ability to build peace through IRD. ”

Nourah Alhasawi



“ Kriya is another unique person I met in the Fellows programme. Above all the valuable things I learnt from him, he taught me how a minority religious person feels in a country where Buddhism is the religion of the majority. That learning immensely helped me to understand my role here in Sri Lanka, where Buddhism is the majority religion. Thanks Kriya! ”

Ven. Galkande Dhammananda



“ “Brother Kriya” or “Zakaria” means “remembrance and also invocation or quintessential prayer”. Dr. Kriya speaks with his unique smile, yet was able to establish a warm and remarkably intimate friendship with me. I have to say that he presents a fascinating blend of Islamic tradition from Pattani Thailand, Brunei and Malay. Dr. Kriya very often had dinner with me and Kenan. My days in Vienna could not have been completed without having dinner with Pak (Mr.) Kriya and Kenan at Lavente Restaurant. With all my warm sincere heart, I thank you very much Pak Kriya and Kenan for being with me on my journey and making everything possible for us together, in His Light, against wind and tide. Salam hangat untuk semua keluarga. ”

Yusuf Daud



“ I am glad to become a friend of Kriya. He is a very friendly person with a generous heart. Since he also fluently speaks Malay, my language, I felt like he was an old friend when we just met. In particular, I learned a lot from him about the problems of interreligious relations in Southern Thailand. The efforts he has made to bring peace among interfaith groups of young people in Pattani really inspired me, especially because his people share many cultural similarities with mine. I do hope that he and I could do collaborative work on interreligious dialogue in Southeast Asia in the future. Keep up the good spirit, Brother! ”

Wiwin Rohmawati

“ Kriya, you are a very polite person. Given that you come from a country that has your religion as a minority and yet, you are so cheerful and have great hope of building peace, makes me imagine what you would do in a more peaceful place. Your country and the world should have more people like you. I remember when you escorted me for shopping, even when you knew the shops had closed. You came with me and it felt like having my brother with me. Thank you so much for being a peaceful person. I hope I can get to that level one day. ”

Nageeba Hassan

A portrait of Ven. Mandalar Lankara, a Buddhist monk with a shaved head, wearing an orange robe. He is smiling slightly and looking towards the camera. The background is a dark, neutral color.

# Ven. Mandalar Lankara

Languages: English, Burmese, Pali  
Religious Affiliation: Buddhism  
Institutional Type: Religious  
Organizations: Sangha Council of Myanmar  
Expertise: Education  
Country: Myanmar  
City: Mandalay

## “WE HAVE TO MAKE PEACE IN OUR HOME AND BE PEACE MESSENGERS”

Ven. Mandalar Lankara grew up in a Theravada Buddhist bubble nestled among Myanmar’s vibrant and diverse religious communities. That bubble burst in 2010 when an Irish Catholic nun came to his monastery in Mandalay to teach English.

“She invited me to her church, where I met Christian priests and sisters. We stayed in touch, and slowly I met Muslims and Hindus around town. I learned from her not only English, but also about different cultures and religions and about promoting peace and harmony, all lessons I now teach my students.”

Mandalar’s long journey from a secluded monastery near the banks of the Irrawaddy River to his temporary residence at the Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum) in Rome was motivated by an

urgent need for interreligious and intercultural peace in Myanmar.

In recent years, religious and ethnic tensions have erupted into violence across the country. The rapid spread of misinformation and hate speech online has only made clashes worse.

“The problem in Myanmar is that people are afraid to lose their identity. That leads to tension, conflict, anger, misunderstanding and discrimination among people who do not even understand the teachings of their own religions.”

In an effort to reduce these tensions and as part of his commitment to the KAICIID International Fellows Programme, Mandalar recruited more than 25 young adults from greater Mandalay’s Buddhist, Muslim, Hindu and Christian communities to take part in 10 weekend sessions of interreligious

training, intercultural dialogue and sacred site visits to local mosques, temples and churches.

Convincing a group of 20-somethings to give up their Saturday mornings and brave the summer's heavy rains on their motorbikes to meet wasn't easy, but Mandalar persevered, reaching out to other religious leaders in Mandalay to help recruit receptive youth from their respective faith communities. His efforts paid off.

“Some students didn't know anything about the other religions before the trainings. They were suspicious and had doubts. Now they are friends and host gatherings of their own in teahouses and coffee shops. They want to better understand each other's religions and want to keep learning about each other's traditions and cultures.”

Mandalar largely credits KAICIID with giving him the knowledge, skills and confidence to design and deliver this much-needed initiative but says the actual idea for the project emerged from collaborative discussions with other fellows. One source of inspiration was Nageeba Hassan Tegulwa, whose work promoting interreligious dialogue and harmony among youth in Uganda encouraged Mandalar to engage young people in his own country.

“Nageeba emphasised to me how important it is to train people when they are young and

receptive to new ideas. I also realised that youth in my country are easier to assemble and more open-minded, and I can train them without much funding.”

Targeting this “Facebook generation” had the added benefit of allowing Mandalar to address hate speech on social media. In addition to interreligious and intercultural dialogue trainings, his initiative taught young people how best to combat misinformation and discrimination they encounter online.

**“People ask me why I wear robes, why Muslims eat Halal, why Buddhists eat vegetarian, why Jews eat Kosher. It's easy to criticize other people and for tensions to build when we don't understand what we see. That's why it's so important to share and discuss our differences.”**

“People spreading hate speech don't understand interreligious harmony, and too many youth are using social networks to make conflict. If we write abusive comments on Facebook, other people will do the same. We cannot extinguish fire with fire. We have

to be cautious about hate speech and not use Facebook as a tool to hate other people.”

Although Mandalar's KIFP youth trainings ended in August 2015, his interreligious and intercultural work is far from over. In January 2016, he hosted a two-day workshop in Mandalay bringing young adults from different faiths and ethnicities together to discuss their customs, traditions, diets and clothes. The workshop aimed to reframe outward differences that sometimes draw ridicule in a more positive light.

“People ask me why I wear robes, why Muslims eat Halal, why Buddhists eat vegetarian, why Jews eat Kosher. It's easy to criticize other people and for tensions to build when we don't understand

**V**en. Mandalar Lankara is a young Buddhist monk who is currently working as a teacher in a monastery in Myanmar. He has been teaching children the basics of Buddhism since 2008, and he occasionally discusses with his fellow monks and novices the importance of understanding other religions. He is interested in teaching, sharing knowledge and making friends with people from different religious and cultural backgrounds. In 2013, he attended a seminar on Islam conducted by Fr Tom Michael, a Catholic priest and scholar on Islamic studies from the United States. There he met Muslim leaders and built many friendships. He also took an iPACE course on Conflict Transformation and English at the Jefferson Center in Mandalay. Having completed this course, Mandalar is eager to learn more about peacebuilding and how to engage young people in interreligious dialogue. His motto is “be patient with everyone and have good thoughts”.

## MEET THE FELLOWS

what we see. That's why it's so important to share and discuss our differences."

After the Fellowship, Mandalar spent a semester in Rome studying interreligious and intercultural dialogue at the Angelicum. There, he still wore his saffron robes as he walked past the Colosseum every day. He returned to his country's gilded pagodas in August 2016, ready to resume his role as an active peacemaker working towards communal harmony and a brighter future for Myanmar. Thanks in part to KAICIID, he won't be working alone.

At the final KIFP training in Vienna, Mandalar met Ven. Acinna, a Buddhist monk from Myanmar and 2016 Fellow currently finishing doctoral work at the University of Kelaniya in Sri Lanka. Mandalar hopes to follow in Ven. Acinna's footsteps, studying comparative peace and conflict transformation at the same university in order to one day apply lessons learned in Sri Lanka to the Myanmar context as a lecturer and trainer. In the meantime, Mandalar says he may assist Ven. Acinna as a facilitator for his KIFP IRD initiative in conflict-ridden Western Myanmar.

Mandalar also plans to address the communal wounds of Myanmar's past using the interreligious dialogue skills he learned as a KIFP fellow.

MYANMAR

"To achieve conflict transformation, we need trauma healing. When people don't understand other religions, this is very hard to achieve. Trauma healing needs to be part of the IRD process, just as we need IRD to end conflicts."

He thanks KAICIID and the KIFP for inspiring him to collaborate with other faith leaders and promote intercultural and interreligious understanding.

"We have to make peace in our home, but we also have to be peace messengers. In order to understand and accept each other, in order to achieve peace and harmony, we have to communicate with people of different religious backgrounds. KAICIID has made that happen."



As part of his initiative, Mandalar worked with 25 Buddhist, Christian, Hindu and Muslim youth during 10 weekends / Photo: Mandalar Lankara



During his semester studying IRD in Rome, Mandalar, joined by HE Bishop Miguel Ayuso, met HH Pope Francis / Photo: L'Osservatore Romano

# ENGAGING YOUTH IN INTERRELIGIOUS & INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE

20 June - 29 August 2015

Venerable Mandalay Lankara believes that Myanmar needs active citizens and organizations that can support and complement social cohesion. This recognition was the basis for this initiative, which engaged youth from different religious backgrounds in the Mandalay area in a three-month interreligious training programme. Representatives of different religions and spiritual traditions met at several occasions for a communal effort to implement interreligious dialogue through educating and teaching.

## OBJECTIVES

- 1 To build bridges among different religions by nurturing open-minded religious leaders with proper skills and knowledge
- 2 To promote the principles of dialogue as means of fostering social cohesion
- 3 To provide a space for exchange of ideas and experiences in the field
- 4 To introduce the participants to conflict transformation so as to become active peacemakers in their respective communities

## OUTPUTS

Beyond theoretical and practical sessions and activities that raised the participants' awareness of the importance of dialogue, they benefited from field visits to religious sites and places of worship. The latter enhanced deeper understanding of the commonalities of the world's major religions. Participants overwhelmingly assigned a great importance to the education and teaching of interreligious and intercultural dialogue. As one participant stated, such efforts must be intensified in the future because "if you provide more trainings to spread such knowledge, more people will understand and share such teachings; then, we will get closer to peace."

## IMPACTS

Venerable Mandalay aims to build on the knowledge he has acquired throughout the Fellows Programme and conduct trainings to teach more youth how to promote peaceful coexistence among diverse religions. To support the capacities of the sub-regional network of his project beneficiaries, he aims to hold joint meetings, and retreats as well as to occasionally organize short field trips to places of worship in Mandalay.

## PARTNERS

- Ven. Mandals (Buddhism) • Ven. Zayaditha (Buddhism) • U Kyaw San (Islam)
- Dr. Aung Win Tun (Islam) • U Aye (Hindusim) • U Myint Swe (Baha'i) • Ma Sandar (Baha'i)
- Fr. Dr. Mark Tin Win (Christianity) • Sister Kathleen Geaney (Christianity)
- Harry Myo Lin (Executive Director, The Seagull, Human Rights, Peace and Development)

## MESSAGES FOR MANDALAR



“Mandalar seems to me a profoundly quiet man. He was accomplished, he had much to teach with his sincere smile. Let’s listen to the silence, in nature, with sincere heart and in God’s love - all of those criteria are within Mandalar. I found Mandalar enlivens forgotten jewels of life and harmonizes today’s diverse world to unite the nations, unite the world, for timeless peace and beauty. I hope one day I can visit him in Myanmar. Let’s keep working and serving humankind in the true spirit of devotion and dedication to God, the Almighty.”

Yusuf Daud



“Knowing this young Buddhist monk has changed my attitude towards the Buddhist-Muslim relationship in Myanmar. I have visited Myanmar many times and have heard from the news about the negative relationship between Buddhist and Muslims there. Here in Vienna I got more time to sit and discuss with him many issues. That led me to change my attitude and we are trying to discuss how to solve the conflict by means of IRD. After the opportunity I’ve had to know him, we will start to explore ways to work together closely.”

Kriya Langputeh



“Mandalar, the young monk. I’ve learned from his serenity, patience and peace. From Mandalar, I got a little bit of wisdom to enjoy every day: “Live in the present moment”. From his Buddhist tradition, I have found very interesting the philosophy of “everything is perception”, a very useful quote to practice compassion and to understand others.”

Victoria Pelaez



“ You are such an excellent, good-hearted, optimistic and dynamic Buddhist master who aims to build intellectual and spiritual bridges among different worldviews. I am happy to have such a Buddhist monk as my wonderful friend, from whom I have learned a lot during and after KAICIID’s meetings. It is one of my primary goals to stay at your monastery in the near future to observe and learn from you and your brothers by also keeping my Muslim identity. I am glad that you are encouraging me for such positive activities. Lastly, I am impressed by your thirst for learning about others “from within”, by enforcing yourself to go deep in also difficult issues. During our conversations, your questions led me to reconsider my religious and cultural values in a more analytical way that let me to develop myself. ”

Kenan Cetinkaya



“ I like you, monk. I love your work with the young people and you have taught me to respect more. Each time I gave you a wrist band, you took it and wore it without telling me it was not allowed. Then you told me in a very humble way that it is not allowed, that you will wear it and keep it where you will see it each day. You taught me a great thing, monk: sensitivity as we work. We need to be more empathetic. Thank you, and stay blessed. ”

Nageeba Hassan





# Tegulwa Nageeba Hassan

Languages: English, Swahili, Luganda, Lusoga  
Religious Affiliation: Islam  
Institutional Type: Academic  
Organizations: Interreligious Council of Uganda, National Coordinating Committee for the Women of Faith Network in Uganda, Restoring and Empowering Communities  
Expertise: Education, Youth, Gender  
Country: Uganda  
City: Kampala

## “IF ALL PEACEMAKERS TOOK ON IRD, THEY WOULD MAKE A LOT MORE PEACE THAN THEY ARE DOING NOW”

**N**ageeba Hassan has been living an interreligious life since childhood. Growing up in a religiously diverse community, her mother instilled in her an appreciation for all peoples and religious traditions and an unconditional respect for others. She also celebrated interreligious diversity by taking part in celebrations of other religions and sharing with those who were in need – regardless of their faith.

Nageeba later became a teacher, and when she began her career teaching Islam, she believed that it was essential to teach respect and understanding of other religious traditions.

**“I just feel that I should have learned this earlier. I would have changed many lives, but I know that it is not too late.”**

It was only natural for her to begin teaching interreligious understanding, as only Christianity and Islam are taught and examined in Ugandan primary schools.

In her teaching, she found that the students were very happy to learn about other religions, but also discovered that there was a strong prevalence

of bullying due to religious prejudices and misunderstandings. Children often had difficulty sharing these experiences

with most adults, but could confide in her. She found that experiences from her own difficult childhood helped her understand the needs of



Nageeba works on interreligious initiatives with people from different tribes, cultures and faith backgrounds / Photo: Nageeba Hassan



She has participated in national and international conferences on peacebuilding and development / Photo: Nageeba Hassan

the children in order to help them through their needs and experiences.

“I feel that I need to turn my childhood challenges into opportunities for the children who do not have someone to teach them, so they can have a meaningful life and make better, informed choices,” she said. “They should be given the opportunity to live a better life.”

However, the community leaders who could help the children were not hearing their stories, so addressing this issue from a top-down approach was ineffective. Nageeba adopted a bottom-up approach by establishing book clubs as a platform for discussion for the children, where they could bring forward issues that they were apprehensive about sharing. By giving them a voice, Nageeba bridged gaps between children of different religions, bringing them together to discuss their own faith traditions.

“The children were able to use books to relate to what happens in real life and around them. Using the “Learning to Live Together” module (a programme developed through workshops organised by the Global Network of Religions for Children in collaboration with other organizations), the children were in better positions to understand themselves in relation to others and how they could transform the world into a peaceful one.”

She faced pushback because many within her community were sceptical of interreligious work, and she also struggled in her predominantly male-led community. Since then, Nageeba has made headway and established herself as a resource for children who now come to her when they face bullying or religious intolerance in their community.

Nageeba sought to enhance her work by looking to KAICIID for further training and guidance.

**T**egulwa Nageeba Hassan’s stepping stone toward interreligious and cultural experience was her experience teaching in an Aga Khan, Uganda primary school for eight years. Starting in 2007, she was involved in a number of community-based projects. It was during this time that she was able to work with different faith-based groups. She has participated in interreligious dialogues, exchange visits, conferences and workshops organized by a variety of countries and organizations, including Uganda Muslim Supreme Council (UMSC), Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC), Interreligious Council of Uganda (IRCU) and Restoring and Empowering Communities (REC) in Uganda, Somaliland & Thailand. Her passion for peacebuilding and women’s involvement in peace making have led to successful global gender initiatives, including the incorporation of women’s desks in the constitutions of both UMSC and IRCU. Representing religious leaders at the 2nd Ministerial Meeting on the Enhancement of Security Cooperation and the Operationalization of the African Peace and Security Architecture, she pushed for the creation of the East African Community (EAC) Interreligious Council. She works with school children and teachers on anti-bullying, cultural diversity and child welfare curricula, as well as community interreligious initiatives with people from different tribes, cultures and faith backgrounds. Her motto is “Before we belong to any tribe, race, color, religion, class or political affiliation, we are first human beings – everyone is special and unique.”

## MEET THE FELLOWS

She began her work with KAICIID at a social media training, and she then pursued the KAICIID International Fellows Programme where she was exposed to a completely new dimension of interreligious practice.

“I actually unlearned certain things,” she said. “I learned to be a better facilitator, I learned to support the children better, and I personally learned something from each individual that helped me improve my life as an individual, in my professional life and in the skills it takes to dialogue.”

The training built on her existing knowledge, but gave her refined tools to better listen and understand dialogue – especially children – and how to respect their perspective and reflections on their experiences. Another change was that she was able to understand the children as equals, which helped her to find new ways to deal with conflict among the children.

In her project implementation, the REC Ambassadors Book Club students from six schools were trained in IRD as another tool to handle religious related violence such as bullying in schools.

“IRD makes them think critically,” she said. “It makes them think out of the box and think deeply about what they say or do and how it affects another person.”

Overall, KIFP was a formative experience for her, and she gained invaluable knowledge and made fast friends.



Nageeba has been involved in various initiatives aiming to increase women's participation in peacebuilding / Photo: Nageeba Hassan



“I’m a person who likes making friends and keeping them.

I made it a point to reach out to all of them and to respect them. I follow up on their work and this helped me learn from them.”

**“I learned to be a better facilitator, I learned to support the children better, and I personally learned something from each individual that helped me improve my life as an individual, in my professional life and in the skills it takes for dialogue.”**

She will continue to teach IRD with the hope of expanding her clubs more broadly and reaching more and more students.

Nageeba will continue working as a bridge builder, and seeks to see women being active in her community, adding value on every level at which they engage.

“I just feel that I should have learned this earlier. I would have changed many lives, but I know that it is not too late,” she said. “If all peacemakers took on IRD, they would make a lot more peace than they are doing now.”



Nageeba works to give a voice to children and young people and encourages them to become peacemakers in their communities / Photo: Nageeba Hassan

## DIALOGUE FOR PEACE TRAINING

29 June - 2 July 2015

**N**ageeba is the Executive Director of the Restoring and Empowering Communities Ambassadors Book Club in Uganda, whose students are currently spearheading an anti-bullying campaign in schools that targets teasing that escalates into bullying. The main teachings are oriented toward peer education and mediation and are supplemented by further engaging youth in dialogue and training in conflict transformation.

### OBJECTIVES

- 1** To strengthen the capacity of children and young people to make ethical decisions based on values that promote respect for other cultures and beliefs
- 2** To empower students and young people to engage in dialogue - to listen and to share views - as a means of developing greater sensitivity to diversity and understanding of others
- 3** To equip students with the necessary skills to become active facilitators and leaders in IRD
- 4** To train students in conflict transformation so as to become active peacemakers in their respective communities
- 5** To network these school clubs and their selected students into an active transnational community of interreligious dialogue peacemakers and peacebuilders

### OUTPUTS

The students have been exposed to, and interacted with, different religious groups and received basic knowledge about beliefs and values of different religions. As future leaders and facilitators in interreligious dialogue, they were introduced to the concept of dialogue, its principles and ground rules. The training invested in community building and intragroup interreligious dialogue activities among the participants to enhance their understanding of interreligious dialogue content and design. Simulation exercises and role playing helped to solidify training for the participants. Students enhanced their presentation and public speaking skills as they presented their ideas in a plenary session. This project will help them facilitate dialogue with their peers and adults in the future.

### IMPACTS

The hope is to implement similar projects in the 54 partner schools in Uganda. Nageeba concluded that she is thankful to KAICIID for the training on interreligious dialogue that she received, which is very important in enhancing a culture of peacebuilding, conflict prevention and reconciliation. She considers the project as an incredibly valuable opportunity to put IRD into practice in her country and context, focusing on those who are most vulnerable.

## MESSAGES FOR NAGEEBA



“Nageeba love”: her nickname on Facebook describes her personality and lifestyle. She impressed me because of her friendship and kindness. Also, an important Nageeba highlight is her capacity to join people, caring for everyone. She is like a mother (her protective side is obvious). She also impressed me because of her intuitive style: she observes, asks and speaks.”

Victoria Pelaez



“She is a very powerful woman. She engages herself in many projects promoting understanding and peace between different religious and ethnic groups in her homeland. I am very impressed by her various activities with pupils, with young and old people and with women. She is very authentic and eager to learn from everyone and everywhere. Her interventions during our programme energise the group in such a positive way that we got many creative ideas. She told me once how she takes full advantage of the internet access which is not usually available in her country and how she downloads many documents and information for her projects. She inspired me to be more aware of the good conditions I enjoy here in Vienna.”

Mabrouka Rayachi



“Nageeba, you are one of my favourite heroines who strives for peace and harmony and one of my mentors for the children’s peacebuilding programme. You allow me to speak to adults and children about their duty and responsibility to prevent violence and to promote peace through dialogue with their friends and neighbours.”

Ven. Mandalara Lankara

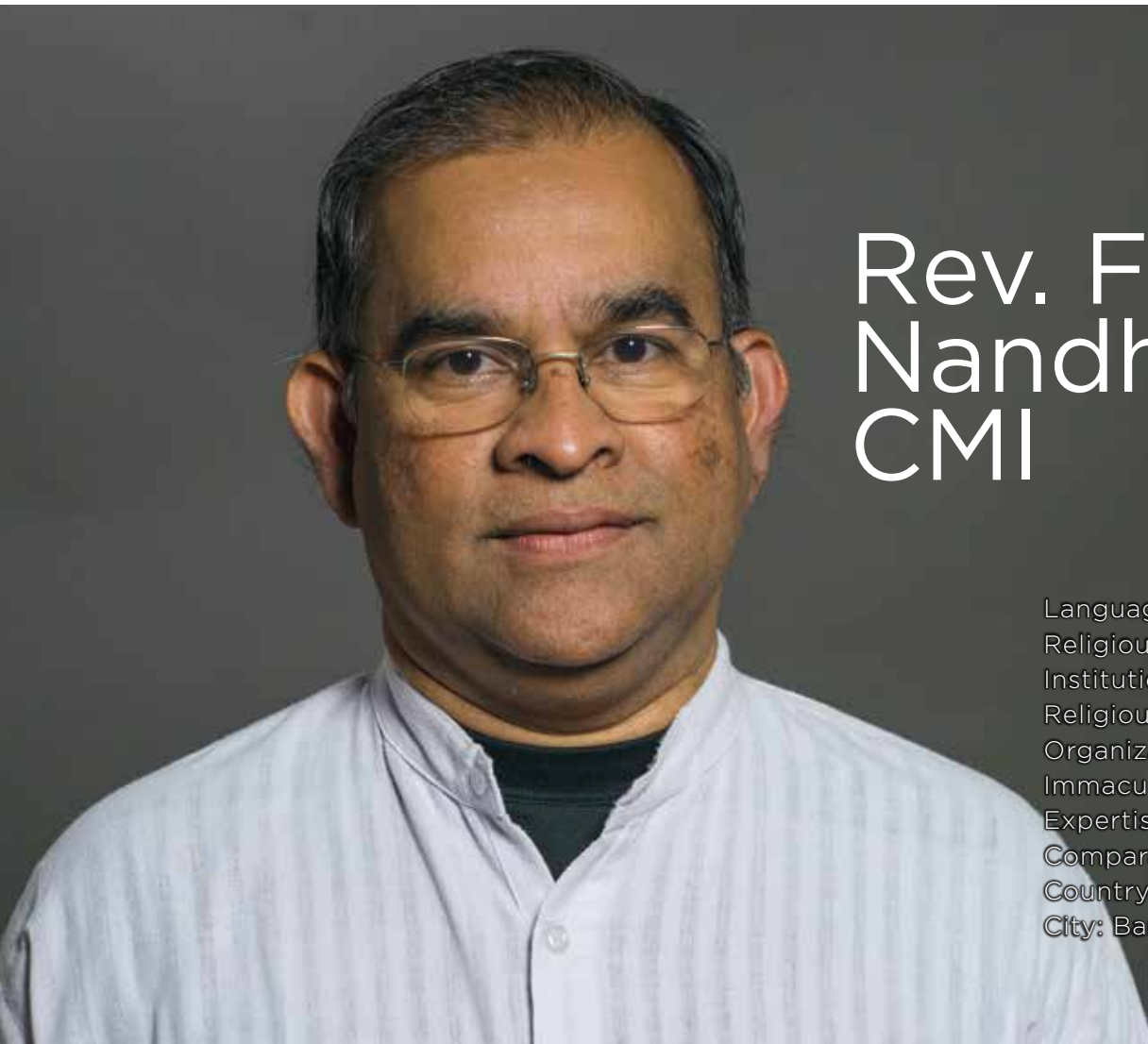


“ Nageeba is a teacher, an activist and a survivor. She brings hope in an area where there have been significant religious differences. We need more Nageeba’s in the world who work with young people and encourage them to explore their differences through dialogue. We have had a great dialogue exchanging over the year on Muslim-Jewish relations and also on religious life in Uganda. She has made me more interested in the communities in her country and the nature of her excellent work. Let’s hope we can all support in her endeavours in the future. ”

Rev. Alexander Goldberg

“ Since I met Nageeba in 2015, I have been learning a lot from her role in the various activities of IRD in Uganda. She is a great and powerful woman. Her big concern on children issues has increased my awareness and reinforced my commitment to do the same. IRD should touch the issue of children and interreligious institutions should be able to work together to address the problem of child wellbeing. After all, children are the future of the nation and the world! Her big confidence to continue working in any situation has inspired me incredibly. Keep up the great works, Nageeba! ”

Wiwin Rohmawati



## Rev. Fr. Jose Nandhikkara CMI

Languages: English  
Religious Affiliation: Christianity  
Institutional Type: Academic, Religious  
Organizations: Carmelites of Mary Immaculate, Dharmaram College  
Expertise: Education, Philosophy, Comparative Religions  
Country: India  
City: Bangalore

### “RELIGION IS LIKE FIRE—YOU CAN’T LIVE WITHOUT IT, BUT IT CAN ALSO CAUSE A LOT OF DAMAGE”

The Rev. Jose Nandhikkara finds deep joy in his identity as a member of the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate, a Catholic religious order founded in the tropical southwestern coastal state of Kerala, India. This Catholic branch especially reveres St. Thomas, one of Jesus’ apostles, whose evangelism is credited with bringing the Christian faith to India in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century A.D.

Father Jose is the seventh and youngest child of devout Catholic parents who call southern state Kerala their home. He understands from personal experience what it means to belong to a minority faith tradition in this largely Hindu country, where it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between Indian culture and the Hindu faith practiced by 80 percent of the population.

But where some individuals might turn away from understanding “the Other,” Fr. Jose showed an unusual thirst for such knowledge, even as a youth. At age 9, he stated learning Sanskrit, a classical language from India in which ancient Hindu Scriptures are written. It is a language nurtured by high status Brahmin scholars, the kind with whom Fr. Jose studied — in contrast to his family’s social status as farmers.

The circumstances of his childhood all primed him to be welcoming toward the challenges and rewards of interreligious dialogue and to focus some of his life’s work on teaching the path of peaceful coexistence among diverse people.

His education, on two continents and in different settings helped prepare him as well. Reminded of

his background as perfectly planned preparation for his life's work, Fr. Jose said he does not view his background and his selection as a KAICIID Fellow an accident. "It is the loving providence of God that has placed me here," he said.

"Here" is not only as a KAICIID Fellow, but as a Director of the Centre for the Study of World Religions at Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram (DVK), a Pontifical Athenaeum located in Bangalore, India. He also teaches at Christ University, a top private university in India, also located in Bangalore.

At the Centre, an interreligious initiative called Fellowship in Religious Experience (FIRE) has worked since the 1980s to bring the study and practice of interreligious dialogue

to dozens of clergy and lay people across the globe. Fr. Jose was able to expand the programme as part of his KAICIID Fellowship.

"Religion is like fire—you can't live without it, but it can also cause a lot of damage," said Fr. Jose. The Centre's FIRE programme equips people of diverse faiths to be leaders fostering peace and interreligious dialogue as a strategy to diffusing violent extremism. At the local level, FIRE hopes to sustain existing religious harmony and build relationships, without fueling the religious tensions

that allow disagreements to flare. The project stresses the reciprocal interactions and influences between religions and spiritual traditions, and the need to promote understanding as a means to challenge ignorance and stereotypes.

FIRE also has a unique component that other KAICIID Fellows appreciated as a successful idea that could be applied in many communities: the role of visits and meals.

"So in public places, all of us behave very nicely, but when you take people to a family's home, a lot of prejudices are broken down, because you see the grandmother is doing the same things as your grandmother and the mother is cooking the same,"

said Fr. Jose. "Our programme is learning through experience and sharing."

The dozen participants in Fr. Jose's KAICIID's Fellows initiative were diverse; they came from Italy, Tanzania, India, and Spain. The participants discovered the richness of religions they were not familiar with and they were surprised by the ways in which diverse religious traditions support peaceful coexistence and harmony. The training provided basic knowledge on rites, beliefs and moral principles, but also highlighted the

**"When you take people to a family's home, a lot of prejudices are broken down, because you see the grandmother is doing the same things as your grandmother and the mother is cooking the same."**

**R**ev. Jose Nandhikkara CMI, a Carmelite Priest, is the Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy at Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram and Head of the Department of Philosophy at Christ University, Bangalore. He also serves as Director of the Centre for the Study of World Religions and Chief Editor of the Journal of Dharma. He also works in the fields of Comparative Religion and Religious Experience and promotes Faiths Seeking Harmony of Life and Fellowship in Religious Experience, through visits, workshops, lectures and conferences. In his interreligious work he is guided by the Vedic vision, "Let noble thoughts come from all sides" (Rgveda 1.89.1) and the motto, *fides querens harmonium vitae* – faith seeking harmony of life. He has an excellent academic record, with three Bachelor degrees in Philosophy, Geology, and Theology and an MA in Philosophy and Theology from Oxford University, as well as a Licentiate in Philosophy from Gregorian University, Rome. He holds a PhD in Philosophy from Warwick University, UK. His doctoral dissertation is titled *Being Human from a Religious Point of View, after Wittgenstein*. Rev Nandhikkara has authored a book, *Being Human after Wittgenstein: A Philosophical Anthropology* and edited the compilation, *Ethical Interface: Literature, Economics, Politics, Religion*. He has also published thirty six research articles in a number of national and international journals and edited compilations. He has attended various national and international conferences where he presented research papers on Philosophy and Religious Studies.

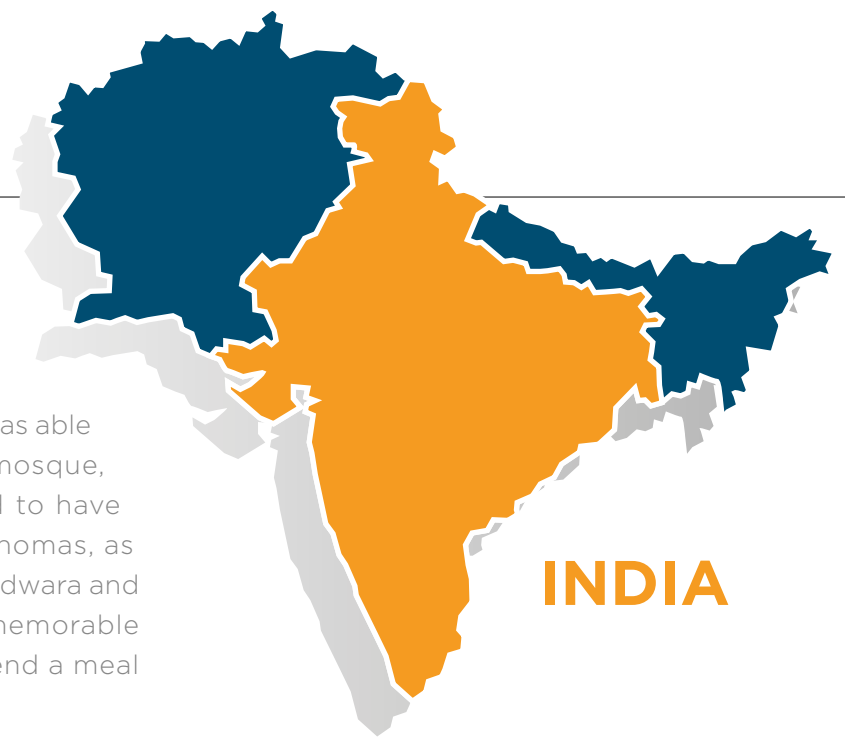


## MEET THE FELLOWS

importance of experiences and encounters.

With KAICIID's support to expand the FIRE programme, Fr. Jose was able to take students to visit India's first mosque, dating to 629, and a church believed to have been founded by Christian Apostle Thomas, as well as visiting a Hindu temple, Sikh gurdwara and other sacred sites. Among the most memorable experiences was having students attend a meal breaking a day's fast for Ramadan.

The project was housed in DVK Centre for the Study of World Religions, inspired by an interreligious perspective of mutual respect and harmonious living among people of different cultural and religious backgrounds. It included lectures by scholars, discourses by believers, visits to places of religious importance, shared meals, observation of rituals and participation in festivals. Calling upon religious values, FIRE aims to educate, organize and mobilize participants on issues that will improve understanding of commonalities, differences and specificities among their traditions.



In his future work, Fr. Jose sees other barriers to tackle before peaceful coexistence becomes reality on a large scale. One such issue is that of intra-religious dialogue, in which people of the same faith unite in a common discussion. He also hopes to adapt the model to dialogue between the religious and secular, the church-state dialogue. He's also organizing a conference on the feminine genius, to look at women leaders, women characters, and more.



Rev. Nandhikkara has been interested in other religions since his childhood / Photo: KAICIID



Rev. Nandhikkara's students visited sacred sites and participated in a meal breaking a day's fast during Ramadan / Photo: KAICIID



Having studied on two continents, Father Jose is an academic and published author / Photo: KAICIID



# FIRE - FELLOWSHIP IN RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE IN BANGALORE

15 June - 30 October 2015

The project is inspired by an interreligious perspective of mutual respect and harmonious living among people of different cultural and religious backgrounds. Through a participative approach to the study of religion – lectures by scholars, discourses by believers, visits to places of religious importance, shared meals, observation of rituals and participation in festivals – the Fellowship in Religious Experience in Bangalore (FIRE) calls upon religious values in order to educate, organise and mobilise participants on issues that will improve understanding of commonalities, differences and specificities among their traditions. The project stresses the reciprocal interactions and influences between religions and spiritual traditions and the need to promote understanding between them in order to challenge ignorance.

## OBJECTIVES

**1** To increase literacy of students on internalization of knowledge and respect the image of the other

**3** To enable the students to understand and interpret the diverse religious beliefs and practices around them

**5** To equip students with the necessary skills to become active facilitators and leaders in interreligious dialogue

**2** To enhance understanding between religions by developing openness and fostering curiosity

**4** To educate the students about religious diversity and respect, to be leaders in peaceful coexistence and harmony

**6** To sustain religious harmony and foster better understanding within and among religious communities at local level

## TARGET GROUP

The training was hosted by the Centre for the Study of World Religions (CSWR) and allowed a group of 12 university students pursuing a master's in Philosophy at Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram, Bangalore, India, to benefit from a range of teaching that is multireligious, intercultural and secular. The group of trainees was diverse as they originated from different states of India, Italy, Spain and Tanzania.

## OUTPUTS

The participants discovered the richness of religions and were surprised by the ways in which diverse religious traditions support peaceful coexistence and harmony. The training not only provided basic knowledge on rites, beliefs and moral principles but also highlighted the importance of experiences and encounters. Through field visits in Christian churches, Hindu temples, Islamic mosques, Buddhist viharas, Sikh gurdwaras, and households, the trainees had the opportunity to interact with believers, monks and nuns. In this framework, the beneficiaries raised their awareness and adopted appropriate attitudes and values, such as respect and tolerance for differences, cooperation and listening to others.

## MESSAGES FOR FR. JOSE



“ Father Jouzy, as we call him in our family, is remarkably calm and wise. Whenever he talks, whether it is an academic or casual discussion, he uses stories, proverbs and morals to deliver the message in a way that you can never forget. His words are motivating and inspiring. He has a cheerful and optimistic view of life: “life is beautiful”. He is such a helpful and dedicated person. When you ask for his help, he wants to make sure that you get what you need with a smile on his face. Every time we meet, he invites me to visit his country India, the wonders city. ”

Basmah Ahmed Jastaniah



“ Father Jose is one of the most inspiring persons I met in the KAICIID Fellows Programme. When he speaks, I see the utmost confidence that he has on what he speaks about. For me, he is a priest of a religion that we can all respect. My personal interaction with him greatly increased my respect to his religion. ”

Ven. Galkande Dhammananda



“ Thank you so much for your wisdom through the trainings, for the great work you do with the students in the universities, for your mentorship that helped me understand more about cultures and tolerance - especially when I made a mistake with your name and you instead made me feel OK with it, saying the mistake made it sound good... and thank you so much for helping us get focused any time we kind of strayed. ”

Nageeba Hassan



INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE IS A  
TRANSFORMATIVE PROCESS THAT  
INVOLVES STEPPING IN AND OUT  
OF ONE'S COMFORT ZONE.



# Rev. Sr. Agatha Ogochukwu Chikelue

Languages: English  
Religious Affiliation: Christianity  
Institutional Type: Religious  
Organizations: Catholic Archdiocese of Abuja, Co-Chair of the Women of Faith Peacebuilding Network  
Expertise: Peacebuilding, Youth, Gender  
Country: Nigeria  
City: Abuja

## “IRD WAS THE ONLY OPTION FOR US”

In a country fraught with sectarian conflict, those most vulnerable are also those who are key to solving the conflict, according to Sister Agatha Ogochukwu, who is building a platform that she hopes will one day help establish lasting peace and development in Nigeria. This platform is made up of women and youth leaders, who she is networking and training in interreligious dialogue to overcome mistrust and hate that arise from a lack of understanding between religions.

This initiative emerged through her participation in the Fellows Programme, and is a response to the ongoing sectarian crisis in the country. Nigerian Christians and Muslims alike are suffering under Boko Haram, an extremist militant group aligned with the so-called ISIS, which misuses religion to drive a wedge between Christians and Muslims. The conflict is dividing Nigeria along tribal and

religious lines, and in this tumultuous context, Sister Agatha believes that dialogue can mitigate the abuse of religion for political ends.

“Interreligious dialogue is very important and highly needed in Nigeria because of the misuse of religion which has resulted in insistent ethno-religious violence in the country that has



Sr. Agatha works with women, hoping to positively influence youth in their upbringing and to prevent future violence / Photo: Sr. Agatha Ogochukwu

negatively affected the good relations that [Christians and Muslims] used to have,” said Sister Agatha. “IRD was the only option for us.”

Her Fellows project supports women and youth specifically because they are the primary victims of violence. Young people are vulnerable to those who misuse religion to recruit combatants for Boko Haram or they fall prey to extremist violence, and Boko Haram has specifically targeted the education system. Through dialogue, Sister Agatha hopes that women can also be taught how to positively influence youth in their upbringing and education, which is key to preventing future violence.

“If children who later become youth are well-trained at home, they will not be manipulated into violence or into terrorist acts.” Sister Agatha said. “If the capacities of women and youth are empowered through IRD, we will have a better peaceful society.”

Her June 2015 IRD training session was an overwhelming success. More than 30 women and youth leaders from interreligious organizations now have the tools to conduct interreligious dialogue, and will use these skills to train others in their

**“This Fellows Programme opened my eyes to the real meaning of IRD and the need to train others because if people truly understand what IRD is all about, then it would help to solve a lot of social problems in the country.”**



Sr. Agatha facilitated two workshops in IRD and conflict resolution in Abuja / Photo: Sr. Agatha Ogochukwu

respective communities. The participants, who exceeded planned participation numbers, had little to no prior experience in IRD, so they were highly receptive and ‘felt empowered’ and requested more training on how to use social media as a tool to further dialogue and to mitigate extremism.

Sister Agatha has extensive working and teaching experience in the country and is currently the secretary of the interreligious dialogue office of the Catholic Archdiocese of Abuja, Nigeria, and

Co-Chair of Woman of Faith Peacebuilding Network Nigeria. She first encountered KAICIID at the 9th World Assembly of Religions for Peace in November 2013 in Vienna where she decided to

**R**ev. Sr. Agatha Ogochukwu Chikelue is a Nigerian Catholic Nun from the Congregation of Daughters of Mary Mother of Mercy (DMMM). She is the Secretary of the Interreligious Dialogue Office of the Catholic Archdiocese of Abuja and Co-Chair of the Women of Faith Peacebuilding Network (WOFPN). Sr. Agatha holds a B.Sc. in Public Administration and M.Sc. in International Affairs and Diplomacy. Her interest in peacebuilding and interreligious dialogue began some years ago as a result of the incessant ethno-religious violence in her home country of Nigeria. Her hunger for peace at this period manifested in efforts to bridge divides across religious and ethnic lines in the country. Sr. Agatha’s passion for peaceful coexistence in Nigeria motivated her to build a network of Christian and Muslim women united against violence and working for peace in Nigeria. Her years of experiences peacebuilding in Nigeria has brought about an understanding that peacebuilding and development are linked but cannot be achieved without justice, forgiveness and reconciliation. She has also learned that gender plays an important role in disputes, negotiating and resolving differences. She believes in a non-violent approach to conflict through dialogue and through actively involving women in peace processes.

## MEET THE FELLOWS

seek further guidance from the Centre, and through the Fellows training, was given the tools to understand and conduct dialogue in her own context.

“I got the idea to train women and youth to become experts in IRD from my fellowship with KAICIID. This Fellows Programme opened my eyes to the real meaning of IRD and the need to train others because if people truly understand what IRD is all about, then it would help to solve a lot of social problems in the country.”

Sister Agatha hopes in the future to continue working in peacebuilding as a scholar with the capacities to analyse structures of violence and conflicts and is currently pursuing a master’s degree in the United States. She wants to build peace with justice and carry fellow women along in peace processes because of their potential for peacemaking. As a practitioner, Sister Agatha wants to be able to implement IRD wherever she is as a competent peace builder who can work wherever she is needed.



The Archbishop of Abuja, HE John Onaiyekan, and Sr. Agatha greet Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI at the Vatican on November 2012 / Photo: Sr. Agatha Ogochukwu



Sr. Agatha was part of KAICIID's delegation at the Parliament of the World's Religions in Salt Lake City / Photo: KAICIID



Sr. Agatha is building a platform with women and youth leaders to establish peace in Nigeria / Photo: Sr. Agatha Ogochukwu



# DEVELOPING INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE SKILLS AMONG WOMEN AND YOUTH IN NIGERIA FOR PEACE

10 - 16 June 2015

**S**ister Agatha's Fellows initiative emerged through her participation in the KAICIID International Fellows Programme, and is a response to the ongoing sectarian crisis in her country, Nigeria. Nigerian Christians and Muslims alike are suffering under Boko Haram, an extremist militant group aligned with the so-called ISIS, which misuses religion to drive a wedge between Christians and Muslims. Sr. Agatha believes that dialogue can mitigate this abuse of religion for political ends. "Too often, religion is misused as an instrument for violence and division, betraying the very ideals and teachings that lie at the heart of the world's great traditions. However, if our diverse communities work in harmony for the common good, then hope will be born that the world can be transformed."

Women and youth are the principal victims of the conflict, so she facilitated two workshops in IRD and conflict resolution to strengthen the capacities of women and youth in Abuja, Nigeria.

## OBJECTIVES

**1** To strengthen the capacity of young leaders and women to disseminate the importance of IRD by focusing on concrete local initiatives

**2** To enhance peaceful and harmonious living in Nigeria by raising awareness of IRD

**3** To build a network of youth and women peacemakers that act at local and national levels

## OUTPUTS

Participants appreciated the knowledge acquired and the skills developed in IRD through this training experience. The workshops received local and media coverage in an attempt to give visibility of women and youth voices for peace. In the long term, Sr. Agatha will encourage the trainees to facilitate similar projects on their own and improve their teaching methodology by approaching and incorporating interreligious dialogue.

## IMPACTS

The idea to train women and youth to become experts in IRD was inspired by her participation in the Fellows Programme. "Although I started my peacebuilding work in Nigeria six years ago, I hadn't realised the real and true meaning of dialogue until my participation in KIFP," Sister Agatha said. "The Fellows Programme made me understand the real impact of IRD and importance of working together in harmony to promote peace in Nigeria. With this same zeal, I integrated my new knowledge of IRD into my work in my country. I am grateful to KAICIID and proud to be one of the KAICIID Fellows."

## PARTNERS

Women of Faith Peacebuilding Network Nigeria • Abuja Interfaith Peacebuilding Youth Forum



## MESSAGES FOR AGATHA



“ Sister Agatha has truly impressed me with her long time works for the Catholic Church at the grassroots level. What inspired me the most is the way she has provided services and empowered all people, especially women in her country, regardless of their religions. Within the context of Nigerian society, with a complicated experience of interreligious conflict, I have seen Sister Agatha tirelessly playing an incredible role towards the creation of a peaceful world. I believe her pursuit of higher studies in the US will mean a lot, both to her personally and to her society in general. Although she was not present in the third training, her spirit remained with all of us. I miss you and God bless you always Sister Agatha! ”

Wiwin Rohmawati

“ There is always positive energy in Sr. Agatha’s presence, but it wasn’t until I had the chance to see her in Salt Lake City at the Parliament of the World’s Religions that I realised what a gift she has. That gift is connecting. Her energy is magnetic and everywhere she went at the Parliament of the World’s Religions she connected with someone. This was especially apparent to me when, on our last night in Salt Lake City, we stopped at an Afghan cafe to get take away. When we walked in, Sr. Agatha was greeted with more than niceties, the owner appeared to talk to her as if they were long-time friends, and she had only been there perhaps a couple of times. This is Sr. Agatha’s great gift: wherever she goes, people are drawn to her, but the most impactful part is how she responds to the people that gravitate to her, she is able to connect with them in a genuine and meaningful way. In that moment, I felt very blessed to be with her in that Afghan cafe. ”

Jessica Sitek

“ I am glad to have a Fellow who not only reads or writes about IRD but, more importantly, experiences it amid clashes and challenges. Learning your story in Nigeria about ethno-religious violence and your work for forming peace among divided communities enhanced my personal perspective about IRD and peacebuilding. I am glad to have such a great activist and student of peacebuilding among Muslim and Christian communities. ”

Kenan Cetinkaya



“ Sister Agatha exudes warmth and has a magnetic personality. When we met at the Parliament of World Religions in Salt Lake City, Utah in October of 2016, I had the good fortune to walk through the presenter booths with her. Walk is a misnomer - we would get two or three steps and someone would stop her to chat and ask questions. This didn't happen just once or twice, but literally every two or three steps! For all of us who have had the good fortune to spend time with her, this is no surprise. ”

Janani Chaitanya

“ Our journey started in 2013 in Vienna, Austria, participating at the Religions for Peace World Assembly, funded and supported by KAICIID. Sister Agatha presenting her work to women of faith greatly inspired me. I liked her zeal towards peacebuilding. I felt I needed to work harder and faster. We met again in Nairobi to be trained as facilitators of learning to live together and then again in Vienna! We may be different in almost everything, but I guess we have one common and agreed upon mission. Peacebuilding begins with me and taking the first step is the most important. We just did! Thank you Sister Agatha for being my friend. ”

Nageeba Hassan



# Jessica Sitek

Languages: English  
Institutional Type: Academic  
Organizations: Macomb Community College  
Expertise: Comparative Religions  
Country: United States  
City: Warren

## “RELIGION IS IN THE EVERYDAY”

Food is a uniting thing that brings people together. Much like interreligious dialogue, it is something that may occasionally provoke disagreements, but it is ultimately a way to bring people together to find common understandings and goals. It also plays a major part in people’s everyday lives, and helps them live.

“Religion is in the everyday, it’s not in some remote institution, but instead is expressed in the lives of real people, reminding them that they are making everyday choices that have a spiritual aspect to them.”

Gardener, vegetarian and aspiring beekeeper, Jessica Sitek is passionate about food, where it comes from and its role as a facilitator of interaction and dialogue. Jessica began cultivating this passion in a garden she grew in her sandbox



During the 2015 Fellows Graduation ceremony, Jessica speaks to a Fellow from India from the 2016 cohort / Photo: KAICIID



as a child, and later, through volunteering in soup kitchens and in faith communities. As she took part in meals at diverse religious gatherings, celebrations and holidays, Jessica noticed an interesting commonality: the role of dialogue.

“Often, there were people from different faith communities coming together to work on a common interest, whether it be food security or poverty. That piqued my interest in this common thread that unites the different faith traditions.”

Jessica is currently an adjunct lecturer at Macomb Community College in Michigan, USA, where she lectures on comparative religion. Her syllabus includes visits to holy sites to explore other

religions, which is something of a field laboratory that gives her the opportunity to observe interreligious interaction in its native setting and how it affects her students firsthand.

She is now exploring commonalities through her Fellows Project, Religion and Food, the Ethical and Spiritual Dimensions of Eating, by researching the relationship between food and religion. The project will touch on Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Sikhism, and secular ideologies

and will give her students the opportunity to examine the role of food – not just in everyday life – but in religious life. This, she hopes, will illuminate how religion affects all facets of a dialogue practitioner’s life – all the way down to food choices.

After visits to a Sikh Gurdwara, a Jain Temple, a Ramadan meal, a Synagogue and an activity in permaculture (a health-oriented lifestyle that minimizes waste, human labor, and

energy input by appreciating natural ecosystems), Jessica will analyse her research, dialogue and reflections. She will then design an exhibit that will visualise how value systems and moral codes inform

how we eat, how eating can be a religious act that connects us, and how it can be a medium of spiritual and moral development.

“Everyone loves food, and they are interested in seeing the connection between food and religion. Food just seems like a mundane, bodily thing, and what I’m trying to show is that religion can be a bodily thing. It is about the here and the now, not just about the hereafter. I’m really interested in everyday lived religion.”

**“I really learned it in my heart that you understand yourself much more through dialogue, so you can be better and more honest with people when engaging in dialogue.”**

Jessica Sitek is guided by the axiom: life is relationships. Barriers exist that obstruct our ability to be in relationship. Our biases, prejudgments, misunderstandings and lack of knowledge can impair our ability to connect with others. As a result, Jessica sees the principles of dialogue as a necessary starting point to recognize and overcome these obstacles, to truly listen and understand, and therefore connect with others in a meaningful way. Jessica has a Master of Arts in Religious Studies from Temple University where she studied under Dr. Leonard Swidler, a pioneer in interreligious dialogue. She has worked with Swidler as a Dialogue Institute (DI) Associate, and traveled to Turkey and Iraq as a DI representative. She has spent some time working in the non-profit sector, specifically in an interfaith context, joining people of various backgrounds and faiths to work on common goals in peace and justice. She is currently an Adjunct Faculty at Macomb Community College teaching comparative religions. She is aware of the limits of individual perspective, the importance of dialogue for expanding understanding, and the need for independent critical thinking. These three serve as the foundation for her educational objectives in the classroom. Jessica also aims to cultivate empathy as a natural byproduct of dialogue and critical thinking. Her interest in intercultural and interreligious dialogue has expanded to include intergenerational dialogue, and she is actively exploring dialogue across generations in her daily life in the interest of formalizing programmes for intergenerational exchange. Jessica is also an aspiring beekeeper.

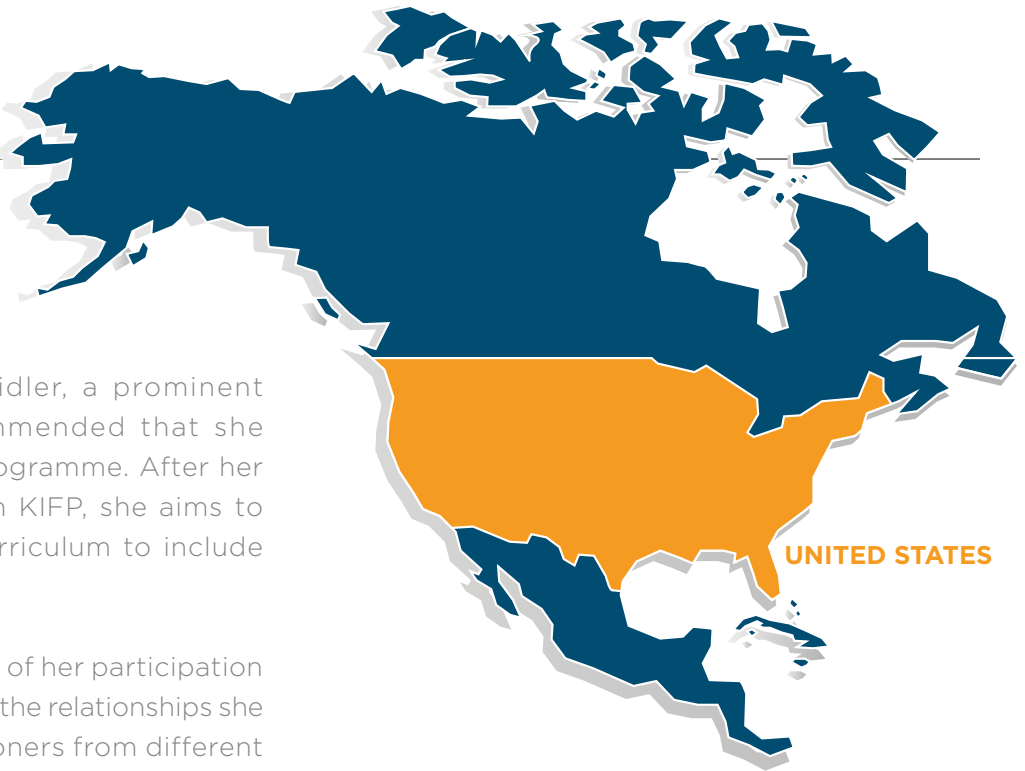
## MEET THE FELLOWS

Before her work with the Fellows Programme, Jessica studied interreligious dialogue with Leonard Swidler, a prominent scholar of IRD, who recommended that she participate in the Fellows Programme. After her experience and training with KIFP, she aims to expand her research and curriculum to include interreligious dialogue.

For Jessica, an important part of her participation in the Fellows Programme was the relationships she established with IRD practitioners from different countries and faith traditions and the dialogue she held with her colleagues.

Jessica was most interested in the knowledge and understanding of the practices and lived experiences from the other Fellows. It was a transformative experience for her individually as well, not only because of the training, but also because of the transformative role of dialogue for the individual, which proved to be an eye-opening experience.

“I really learned it in my heart that you understand yourself much more through dialogue, so you can be better and more honest with people when engaging in dialogue,” she said. “The same thing is happening on the other end. That allows you to go deep and get close because you realize that you’re both being vulnerable and being really honest about who you are.”



Jessica receives her plaque upon her graduation from the Fellows programme at KAICIID Headquarters in Vienna / Photo: KAICIID



On October 2015, Janani, Sr. Agatha and Jessica attended the Parliament of the World's Religions in Salt Lake City, United States / Photo: KAICIID



Jessica, Victoria and Fr. Jose talk during the second training, in Kuala Lumpur / Photo: KAICIID



## RELIGION AND FOOD; THE ETHICAL AND SPIRITUAL DIMENSIONS OF EATING

September - November 2015

Jessica Sitek's project explored the relationship between religion and food, specifically how the selection, procurement, preparation and consumption of food all become processes by which the values of a religion can be expressed and perpetuated. Since food has the potential to tell stories and pass on values, this project not only aimed to explore the possibility and meaning in our meals, but also attempted to utilise food as a platform for dialogue and sharing.

### OBJECTIVES

**1** Design an exhibit for Macomb Community College library where faculty, staff, students and community members could be introduced to the place of food in a variety of traditions, and be invited, through viewing the exhibit, to begin to see food differently

**2** Prepare a course curriculum to be proposed to the curriculum board of Macomb Community College

**3** Facilitate dialogue through food. This has been, and continues to be, achieved on a number of levels such as through shared meals, and individual one-on-one dialogues

### OUTPUTS

The library staff reported that, "overall, the exhibit was valuable for the library, the community, the faculty and staff, and Macomb Community College. The event supported our aims in increasing knowledge, sensitivity, and skill in cross-cultural interactions. It truly provided an experience in enrichment and education with regard to diversity." One student explained that "all the lifestyles presented have something we can all learn from." Having the opportunity to design and implement a project through the Fellows Programme prompted Jessica to explore a personal interest in a way that could have a community impact, while also establishing "community impact" as a personal measure for future academic work. Additionally, the KIFP programme prompted her to consider creative and natural ways to facilitate dialogue with students that helps nurture, "maybe not so much skills, but a disposition toward dialogue", she said.

### IMPACTS

The next phase of the project entails finalising the curriculum and proposing the course syllabus to Macomb Community College's curriculum board. The expectation is that the course will include regular opportunities to convene over food as a means of facilitating dialogue between students and their hosts. Beyond the individual KIFP project, the Fellows Programme has provided opportunities to foster relationships. "This has had the greatest personal impact, because it is through these relationships that I have grown my understanding of myself, my friends, and the religions they are living in their everyday. This is an invaluable outcome of and gift from the KAICIID fellowship."

## MESSAGES FOR JESSICA



“ Jessica, the active butterfly in the family. She is the initiator and speaker. I will never forget the Starbucks coffee cup that she used to bring me when she learned that I love Arabica coffee. Not only that, but she made sure that I received it before it got cold. She has a very distinctive smile and she always monitored us to make sure that we were on the right track. ”

Basmah Ahmed Jastaniah



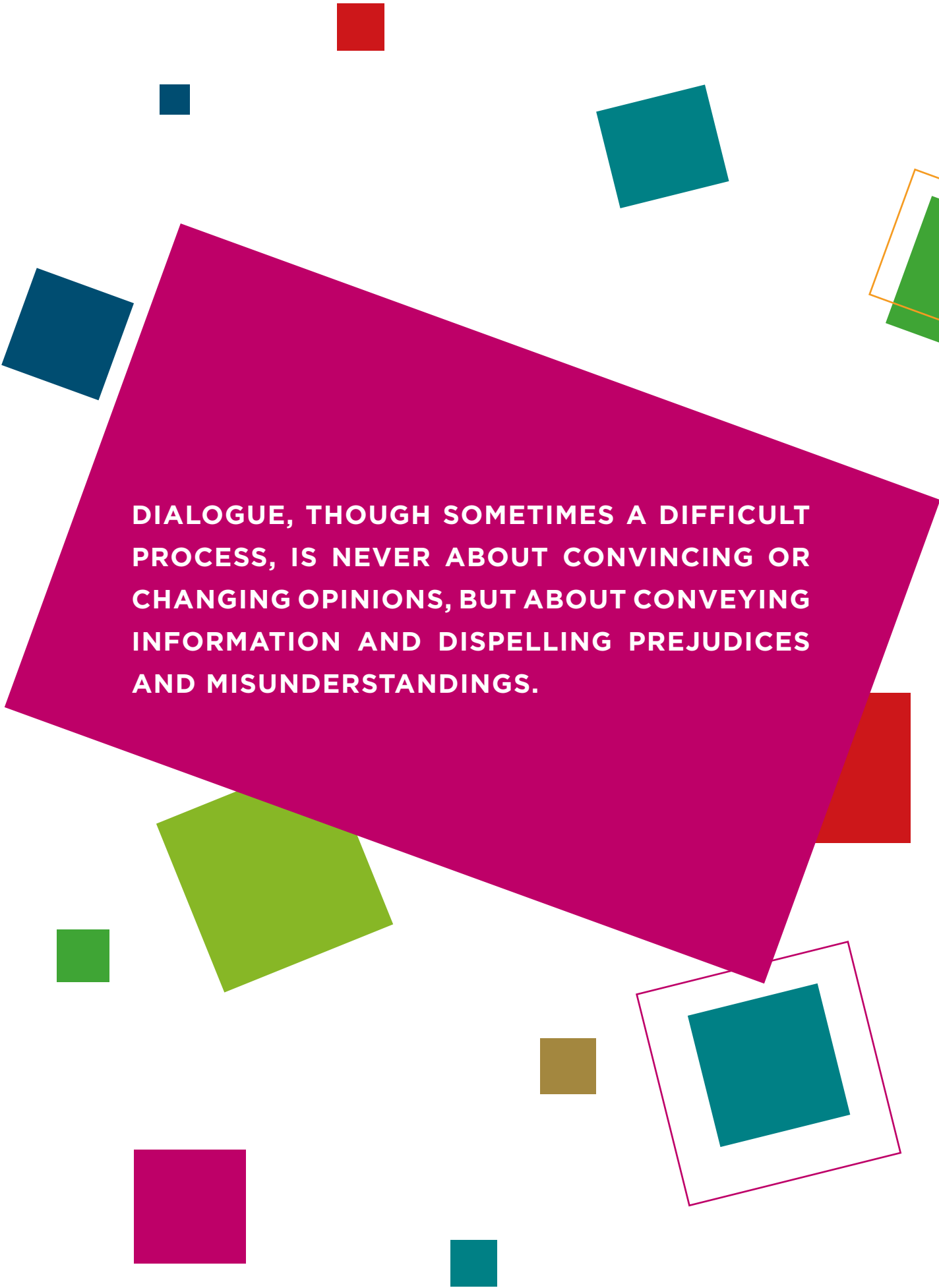
“ Jessica is an excellent facilitator. I had that in mind when we met in the first training in KAICIID last year, but I did not realize how beautiful a person she is until I spent a time with her in India, almost three months after that first training. I saw her doing her best to understand and to be just and objective. I noticed how she opened her eyes widely in a strong effort to grasp and analyse what she saw and heard. Every time I see Jessica, I realize that this programme, KIFP, succeeded in helping us learn about each other’s backgrounds, building bridges and appreciating each other’s company. ”

Nourah Alhasawi



“ Jessica, the youngest and the leader of the group. She has an important commitment, facing the leadership of the group. It is easy to connect to her because she is friendly. She combines youth, gentleness and inner strength to encourage challenges. And I relate to her through sports: we are both runners. ”

Victoria Pelaez



**DIALOGUE, THOUGH SOMETIMES A DIFFICULT  
PROCESS, IS NEVER ABOUT CONVINCING OR  
CHANGING OPINIONS, BUT ABOUT CONVEYING  
INFORMATION AND DISPELLING PREJUDICES  
AND MISUNDERSTANDINGS.**





## Victoria Pelaez

Languages: English, Spanish  
Religious Affiliation: Christianity  
Institutional Type: Academic  
Organizations: Rafael Landívar University  
Expertise: Social Inclusion, Development, Education  
Country: Guatemala  
City: Tactic, Alta Verapaz

### “WHEN DIALOGUE BETWEEN RELIGIONS IS POSSIBLE, IT BECOMES MORE FEASIBLE TO ACHIEVE SOCIAL DIALOGUE”

Victoria Peláez sometimes wakes up, in the early hours of the morning, with a message on her mobile that one of her colleagues from the KAICIID Fellows Programme has sent “during normal hours” from the other side of the world. Often, instead of going back to sleep, she carries on chatting to the colleagues from whom she has learnt so much throughout the duration of the programme. The coexistence with different religions and cultures is what has been most valuable for her. This ongoing meeting on social networks, she says, has been very important. Not only has it allowed them to overcome the distances between them but it has also allowed them to continue learning and strengthening their ties.

Victoria, a researcher from the Rafael Landívar University in Guatemala, has been involved in the area of intrareligious and interreligious dialogue for more than 15 years. She has always learnt a lot, she states, from every experience of coexisting with people of different faiths. “The differences have never been a reason to either move away from or confront each other. Quite the opposite”, she says.

However, she recognises the difference between working in this area in formal settings and doing so in informal settings, an opportunity offered to her by KAICIID: “In Malaysia, for example, it was very enriching to visit the sacred sites of different religions. I had never been to any Hindu sites. And then, a colleague took me to the women’s

section of the mosque and explained it to me. This brings awareness, helps you to focus. The experience hits you in the gut and enables you to take on this issue”.

She summarises what she has gained from the KAICIID programme in three points: knowledge about other religions, which makes her appreciate them more; convictions about the importance of education in interreligious dialogue, and an understanding of attitudes in interreligious relations. All of this has been acquired through bibliographical information, conferences, networking with participants and visits to sacred sites. The workshop discussions, she recalls, helped to shape many of her ideas.

Victoria is convinced of the importance of promoting a culture of dialogue for mutual understanding and peacebuilding. That is why she is interested in interreligious dialogue. “Religion is tied to people’s emotions and feelings. When dialogue between religions is possible, it becomes more feasible to achieve social dialogue about many other issues”, she says.

Before participating in the KAICIID Fellows Programme, her experience had mainly been in intrareligious dialogue, more common in Latin America due to the fact that it is

predominantly a Christian region. Guatemala is no exception. The religious differences in her country do not cause political tensions, she explains. However, she has found isolated pockets of intra-religious tension between

**“Social changes are taking place among new generations. Adolescence and youth are appropriate life stages for promoting greater awareness about the needs of social change.”**



Victoria asked her students to write about what they learned and to reflect on their commitment to a culture of interreligious dialogue. In the photo, she presented her students’ texts to the other Fellows / Photo: KAICIID

Christian groups at the local level. Furthermore, the demands of the indigenous movement for recognition of their ancestral practices - including religious expression - has caused clashes between some denominations.

interested in finding within interreligious dialogue a model for dialogue about other issues or sectors of society: “Dialogue as an attitude and as a daily practice in the area of religion can become a daily practice in other areas like, for example, politics”.

When Victoria stresses the importance of interreligious dialogue for peacebuilding in her country, it is not because of great conflicts between local religions. She is

Victoria Pelaez has been a social researcher on gender, migration and social inclusion for more than 10 years. She teaches social research at Rafael Landívar University (a Jesuit university) in Guatemala. A Roman Catholic, her academic interests focus on how excluded populations can be involved in development processes with regard to human beings and ethical values. Since 2001, she has coordinated the Guatemalan Interreligious Development Dialogue and is dedicated to sharing common values, perspectives, and visions with Christian, Jewish and Mayan individuals. Victoria hopes to find ways to empower marginalised groups to become more involved in their own social and economic growth and the full realization of a higher quality of life. Within this framework, she believes that religions have an important role to play in sharing experiences, values and guidance. Every day, she asks herself one simple question: Who needs me more?

## MEET THE FELLOWS

Her initiative for the Fellows Programme was a ten-week seminar to motivate young people to build peace through interreligious and intercultural dialogue. She implemented it in a secondary school in Tactic, in Alta Verapaz - a town with a mainly indigenous population, situated 184 km from Guatemala City - with 63 young people between 17 and 21 years old and 11 teachers as beneficiaries.

In the various meetings, she worked to raise awareness among students about other religions by eliminating stereotypes and promoting positive relationships between people of different religious faiths.

Victoria still remembers the reactions of her students when she took an imam to one of the sessions: "It was a novelty to see him arrive, to listen to him". She adds that, for these students, imams were characters they had only seen in films or TV series. "In the session we talked about the common origin of Abrahamic religions and the shared values. It was also a very good opportunity to explain that many countries where Islam is practised are also affected by conflict and by extremism".

Victoria is open to repeating the experience after systematising it, perhaps introducing the study of interreligious and intercultural dialogue and comparative religions into the curriculum, training teachers to act as multipliers or selecting some students with whom she would work outside of the class timetable to make it more personal. In fact, she is currently organising a seminar for

## GUATEMALA

teenagers from 12 to 13 years old that will run as an extracurricular activity.

"Social changes are taking place among new generations. Adolescence and youth are appropriate life stages for promoting greater awareness about the needs of social change", she states. The work is only just starting.

As a result of her project she is now more committed to education and social problems, and has learned that methodologies for interreligious dialogue should involve children, teenagers, teachers and parents. "It is necessary to move towards more integrated methodologies", she states. She left teachers with a toolbox of subjects, ideas and educational resources to promote a culture of dialogue - particularly interreligious dialogue - in their classes and to incorporate into the curriculum.

In the long term, she believes that the project will produce adults who practise dialogue to transform differences and conflicts: "If the project continues, it is possible to imagine a society that is open to dialogue and, as a result, to build peace".



Victoria has been involved in IRD for about 15 years, but the Fellows Programme was for her a different and personal experience. In the photo, she is with Fr. Jose in Kuala Lumpur / Photo: KAICIID



During the Fellows graduation, Victoria (centre) received her diploma from KAICIID's Director General, Fahad Abualnasr (right), and from the Senior Adviser Mohammed Abu-Nimer (left) / Photo: KAICIID



## YOUTH PEACEBUILDERS

July – October 2015

The project aims to prevent conflicts in local environments, considering the influence that youth can have in their social and familiar environments. The focus is on providing intercultural and interreligious dialogue training to teenagers who are concluding secondary school. The project includes three components: a seminar, teaching materials and systematisation. This initiative is developed primarily at a micro level as here religion reflects a deeper sense of identity. Particularly, the project focuses on the education of young people and the recognition that interreligious and intercultural based training can strengthen community cohesion. Youth have the potential to influence their communities, but their effectiveness depends on two main factors working in tandem: (i) systematic training on dialogue provided by scholars and (ii) values of peace and compassion to be shared within their family environment. “The challenge is always to prove that there is more that unites us than divides us.”

## OBJECTIVES

**1** To promote intercultural and interreligious dialogue in a rural Guatemalan context

**2** To build capacities on intercultural and interreligious dialogue

**3** To practice skills for coexistence in diversity

**4** To learn more about the “Other”

## OUTPUTS

The training had a positive effect on all involved. Youth practice peaceful behaviours and know about religious diversity in Guatemala and around the world. Teachers develop teaching materials and local contents to introduce the contents in the curriculum. The methodology is being systematised.

## IMPACTS

The project is trying to introduce dialogue elements in the curriculum, considering that: (i) religions have the potential to influence individuals and groups and (ii) religious prejudice and stereotypes are counted among the long-term causes of hatred in the country.

## MESSAGES FOR VICTORIA



“ In Victoria Pelaez I see a young beautiful lady who refused to give up in spite of communication and language barriers. Coming from a non-English speaking background, Vicky struggles to communicate effectively during classes and with each one of us but, what surprises me more is her refusal to give up. I believe, this is what dialogue and peacebuilding is all about and that’s what KAICIID is trying to inculcate in us through KIFP, the ability not to give up in the face of difficult challenges, because engaging in a meaningful interreligious dialogue is not an easy task but a continuous challenge/fight that we must not quit. You taught me this Vicky through your persistence in sticking to KIFP, and with this experience, I think I need something of your persistence when faced with critical challenge, so don’t forget me in your prayers please. ”

Rev. Sr. Agatha Chikelue



“ Vicky was a bright spot in the KAICIID room. Her quick smile and warm hug were always welcome as was her interest and way of including all those around her. While devoted to her own faith she does not shy away from learning about other faiths. Her understanding of and love for the people in her home town in Guatemala is most inspiring. ”

Janani Chaitanya



“ Once I knew Vicky’s story and background, I was sure I could learn from her. Our work has some common threads, but since we implement in different contexts, I was interested to understand her context and how she responds. When Vicky shared her KIFP initiative, it was evident in her students’ work that Vicky applied a thoughtful and intuitive approach to impacting the community. The children made books to record their learnings, and these books offer a sense of accomplishment, are something the children can share with others to spread the impact, and a physical reminder of the journey they have begun to understand the other. I am inspired by Vicky’s ability to be in the academic space and also be in out the world making an impact. ”

Jessica Sitek



“ Victoria Pelaez wakes up with the question: Who needs me more? She draws strength from her Christian faith and moves to the margins, to the least, the lost and the last. She follows the path of Lord Jesus “to give life in its fullness” (John 10.10). I find in her an admirable person, brimming with the joy of the Gospel, surrounded by the love of the family, connected with her parish and the University. She is equally involved in the parish, university and excluded populations. Interreligious dialogue is for her a means to bring a higher quality of life for marginalised groups and she manages to bring together Christians, Jews and Mayans. ”

Rev. Fr. Jose Nandhikkara

“ Vicky I admire the kind of work you are doing in your country given the situation. You inspire me in many things and one of them is your personality which stimulates me to be more rational and compassionate in life, reducing stress factors to improve our efficiency. I remember when we lost each other and we came back separately with sore feet: you still looked for me worried but while I couldn't take another step, you had to get to where everyone was for the group activity. Vicky, I wish and pray to get that kind of resilience, because with such zeal a lot can be done. Love you Vicky! ”

Nageeba Hassan



# Mabrouka Rayachi

Languages: English, German, Arabic, French  
Religious Affiliation: Islam  
Institutional Type: Academic  
Organizations: Islamic Religious Authority of Austria  
Expertise: Education  
Country: Austria  
City: Vienna

## “THE SCHOOL IS THE BEST STARTING PLACE FOR DIALOGUE”

**M**abrouka is an experienced IRD practitioner who has been working in Austria for many years. She has a strong network of like-minded religious leaders of different faiths who share her vision of spreading dialogue and recognition of other faiths and cultures.

Austria is facing an influx of asylum seekers from conflict in the Middle East, Central Asia and Africa and the new residents and Austrian public are facing issues of integration and cultural misunderstanding. In her position, Mabrouka uses her authority as a leader in the Austrian school system and reputation as a proud Austrian Muslim

to help refugee children in many ways. For her, finding entry points is key to making a difference.

“I think we have to do it not only at this level of states and governments, we have to do it at the grassroots,” she said. “That is why I think the school is the best starting place for dialogue. Children don’t have these problems, they don’t see these differences.”

**“KAICIID has offered me this unique opportunity. People all over the world have the same objective as me and they want to do something positive in the world.”**

She is working with children who have not yet developed prejudices and who, from her experience, are more open-minded to new cultures and people. Through her

work as a KAICIID Fellow, she is using her expertise and her network in Austria to help Austrian



Mabrouka has been working with asylum seekers in Austria to facilitate integration / Photo: KAICIID



During the second training, in Kuala Lumpur, Mabrouka and Jessica had the opportunity to talk with local religious leaders / Photo: KAICIID

educators of different faiths teach the importance of IRD and to engage students in dialogues to promote understanding. For her, Austria is a prime environment for fostering interreligious understanding.

“I think in Austria we have the opportunity and the chance to do these things. We are in a pluralist country, whether we want to be or not, and we have

to come together so that we promote this peace that reigns in this country and to maybe spread it to other countries. We have the chance, the facilities, the laws that promote these things.”

**“I think the school is the best starting place for dialogue. Children don’t have these problems, they don’t see these differences.”**

She works as a bridge builder by helping facilitate donations, language education and translation for asylum seekers. She also organizes students to help them by supporting German language learning. She hopes that she can facilitate the integration

of children who are asylum seekers by lessening the fear of the ‘other’ and by teaching them about the cultural differences. She feels that by facilitating

understanding between peoples, she can avoid misunderstanding and potential confrontations. So far, she has received excellent feedback and support from the Austrian authorities.

**M**abrouka Rayachi completed a masters degree in English and German from the Bourguiba school in Tunis in 1991 and earned a diploma in pedagogy from the Islamic Religious Pedagogical Academy in Vienna in 2004. She was a religious teacher in Viennese schools from 1993 to 2012. During this time she organized many interreligious programmes with other religion teachers (mainly Catholic and Protestant). In April 2012 she became an Inspector for the Islamic religion teachers in Lower Austrian schools and initiated an interreligious seminar with her Catholic and Protestant colleagues on subjects such as the celebration of religious traditions in Islam and Christianity. She encourages her fellow teachers to actively encourage interreligious dialogue in school by regularly providing them with ideas and teaching materials. She is especially interested in broadening the interreligious activities, especially among young people. During the course of her work on interreligious dialogue, she has not only learned about other faiths, but has also learned much more about and deepened her own faith. As an active member within her Islamic community, she was chosen as the official Austrian representative to the first International Women’s Congress for a Culture of Peace in Algeria in 2014. Her motto: The way to sustainable peace is interreligious dialogue.



## MEET THE FELLOWS

Her efforts were further strengthened by her participation with KAICIID. She took part in an education conference, and later sought support with further training and professional development.

“KAICIID has offered me this unique opportunity. People all over the world have the same objective as me and they want to do something positive in the world.”

Through the programme, she was able to interact with the other Fellows and had unique knowledge-building opportunities that she would not have had without participating in KIFP. They brought their hearts, minds and will to work together and share knowledge and experience.



“I learned from everyone here. It was a living dialogue. We had differences, surely, but we were also aware that these differences have to be there, otherwise one loses oneself. But there are more similarities and we work on these similarities because our objective is to promote peace to make the world better.”



On February 2016, Fellows Mabrouka and Alexander attended a lecture by Austrian Federal President Heinz Fischer on the occasion of World Interfaith Harmony Week / Photo: KAICIID



# INTERRELIGIOUS AND INTERFAITH LEARNING - A KEY BUILDING BLOCK FOR PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE AT SCHOOL

October 2015 – May 2016

**K**AICIID Fellow Mabrouka Rayachi supports the view that a culture of peace and acceptance should be promoted through education as a way to enrich dialogue. She feels that the challenge is to explore ways of incorporating in the curricula the core values of different religious traditions, as such pedagogical principles could highlight the common humanity of all people. The teacher is the agent to facilitate such processes. Through her initiative, Mabrouka seeks to engage Islamic religious teachers in interreligious dialogue training and facilitation. This one-year project aims to make Islamic religious teachers in lower Austria aware of the importance of interreligious and intercultural dialogue as a pedagogical teaching principle in promoting and sustaining peaceful coexistence at school. The main objective of this project is “to make IRD an inherent part of Islamic religious teaching, because through intensifying IRD at schools, young people will be more tolerant and understanding.” By merging the knowledge and skills acquired during the training, the participants will work on designing and developing initiatives on how to achieve these recommendations.

## OBJECTIVES

1

To equip teachers with various methodological tools for interreligious and intercultural dialogue

2

To help them on the development of their own interreligious and intercultural projects and create “competence-oriented” teaching materials for interreligious topics

## OUTPUTS

After the training, the selected teachers will be committed for the academic year to educate their students about interreligious dialogue, to equip their students with the necessary skills to become active facilitators and leaders in interreligious dialogue and to train their students in conflict transformation so as to become active peacemakers. In this respect, teachers will contribute towards promoting a peaceful environment at school and the importance of interreligious dialogue as an essential tool to preserve this diversity. Although the project is still in process, the teachers are inspired by the initiative and are already organizing interreligious projects and developing educational materials.

## IMPACTS

“As an active member in interreligious dialogue in my Islamic community in Austria, I think KIFP gave me the precious opportunity to meet other active people in this domain from different religions and from around the world. This experience has broadened my perspectives. I learned, and I am still learning a lot from others,” Mabrouka said. “I am proud of gaining a new sub-identity called a KAICIID Fellow.”

## MESSAGES FOR MABROUKA



“ Mabrouka Rayachi is one of the smart good looking female KAICIID Fellows that I so much admired during our KIFP. I like her because of her unbiased assessment to issues. She is open, frank and straight to the point when it comes to discussion and she does not sound over-protective of her culture or religion. I learnt a lot from her openness and this has taught me that in dialogue we should be ready to examine things more critically without appearing to be over defensive of oneself, what one believes in or where one comes from. As religious leaders, teachers and peace practitioners, this is one of the key ways to engage in a fruitful dialogue if we truly want to build lasting peace. Mabrouka, please keep this up, it's a mark of a true Ambassador of Dialogue and this is what KAICIID wants from all of us and not just you. Pray that I will have something of this great quality of yours. ”

Rev. Sr. Agatha Chikelue




“ Alhamdulillah, Thanks God for the chance given to me to know a kind and generous sister, Mabrouka. Knowing her led me to discover how good is Vienna as the centre of interreligious and intercultural dialogue. She is a very good and understandable person. She accepts differences while at the same time preserving her own identity as a Muslim woman and as an Austrian. I am also very happy to know her and look forward to future relationship and collaboration. ”

Kriya Langputeh



“ My dearest, thank you for being very assertive when needed and for taking time off the busy schedule to take the Fellows shopping and visiting your workplace. Thank you for being smart, a great host and appreciating each ones work. Thank you, love. ”

Nageeba Hassan



**INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE IS NOT ABOUT COMPROMISING ON ONE'S BELIEFS, BUT IS A FORMALISED PROCESS THAT SUPPORTS MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING WHILE RESPECTING EACH INDIVIDUAL'S RELIGIOUS BELIEFS.**



# Wiwin Rohmawati

Languages: English, Arabic, Bahasa  
Religious Affiliation: Islam  
Institutional Type: Religious, Civil Society  
Organizations: Interfidei, Nahdlatul Ulama, Forum for Interreligious Harmony  
Expertise: Gender, Youth, Interfaith and Interreligious Dialogue  
Country: Indonesia  
City: Yogyakarta

## “MORE AND MORE PROBLEMS OF HUMANITY MUST BE FACED TOGETHER BY RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES WORKING TOGETHER”

Religion plays an important role in Indonesian life and culture and has a unique place in the public and private sphere. However, conflict has accompanied the enormous religious and ethnic diversity of the country. In one former hotbed of conflict, a 2015 KAICIID Fellow is working to bring communities together. Wiwin Rohmawati convened an interreligious group of women in Yogyakarta, a small region in Java, Indonesia, with the goal of pulling down walls between religious communities.

“Women have a great strength in spreading the values of tolerance, interreligious dialogue

and peace to their families and communities,” said Wiwin. “There are still many challenges and obstacles – social, economic, political, cultural and religious – in involving women in decision-making processes within religious institutions in their efforts to build and develop interreligious dialogue.”

**“KIFP has been very helpful to me in the designing of my initiative and its implementation, particularly, on how I can be a good facilitator.”**

As part of her initiative, Wiwin led a women’s religious dialogue session to address and explore religious prejudices and suspicions and to establish an interreligious dialogue network for young women in the region. Titled “Empowering Young Women to Manage Religious Diversity in Yogyakarta,” the 24 women from six religions shared experiences with those of other religions



Wiwin implemented her Fellows initiative in August 2015, an IRD session for women in Yogyakarta / Photo: Wiwin Rohmawati

and discussed their fears, misunderstandings or prejudices in order to dismantle these barriers and learn the skills to foster confidence and friendship.

During the workshops, participants discussed the religious dynamics in Yogyakarta, a microcosm of Indonesia, where many ethnicities and religions live and thrive. According to Wiwin, this diversity can sometimes lead to friction that increases the potential for conflict and violence. Workshop participants found that young women of all faiths have the same concerns but agreed that dialogue to mitigate conflicts is possible, despite ethnic and religious differences. By sharing their experiences, participants focused on how women can make a difference by playing an active role in their community.



She visited the Javanese Christian Churches Gondokusuman (Protestant) with members of Srikandi Lintas Iman / Photo: Wiwin Rohmawati

Wiwin has been involved for many years with womens' issues, especially their role in interreligious dialogue. Her further training from KAICIID altered her perspective and broadened her knowledge on IRD, and it has enriched her skill set, giving her more tools to design and to facilitate the course on IRD.

"KIFP has been very helpful to me in the designing of my initiative and its implementation, particularly, on how I can be a good facilitator. The knowledge I have gained from the first training has strengthened my understanding of interreligious dialogue as well as broadened my perspective on it. While the second training was very helpful to me in increasing my knowledge on how to facilitate

**W**iwin Rohmawati is Vice President of Fatayat of the Nahdlatul Ulama and a Board Member of the Forum for Interreligious Harmony in Yogyakarta. She has been working in the field of interreligious dialogue for over 15 years. At Interfidei (Institute for Interfaith Dialogue in Indonesia), a pioneer of interreligious dialogue in Indonesia, she works as a researcher, trainer, editor, programme officer, executive secretary and senior staff member. She also teaches several courses on Islam, interreligious dialogue and peacebuilding at Duta Wacana Christian University in the town of Yogyakarta. She has also assisted with several programmes organized by The Dialogue Institute at Temple University, USA (2010-2011). Her main interest is the position and role of woman in conflict resolution and peacebuilding through interreligious dialogue. In 1999, as an undergraduate student and part of the Indonesian delegation, she attended the 7th World Assembly of the World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP) in Amman, Jordan. She finished her MA in Interreligious Relations at State Islamic University in Yogyakarta under the sponsorship of Kerk in Actie, a programme for missionary and diaconal work of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands. Along with her colleagues and network at Interfidei, she has successfully organized several national meetings on interreligious dialogue and peacebuilding issues in Makassar (2002), Bali (2003) and Papua (2014). While the Indonesian government requires all public schools from elementary to university levels to teach religion as a compulsory subject by using a mono-religious model (each student learns only his/her religion), since 2011 Wiwin and her friends have been promoting the implementation of an interreligious model of instruction, especially among middle school religion teachers in Yogyakarta. Her motto is "work hard, think smart and have a sincere heart".



an effective training with participants of different religions as well as on how to design a course of interreligious dialogue.”

Wiwin is an expert in interreligious dialogue and has been working in IRD in the region for more than 15 years. She began her career in dialogue as a student in Yogyakarta and later moved on to become a researcher, trainer and editor. Currently, she is member of the senior staff and a researcher at Interfidei (Institute for Inter-faith Dialogue in Indonesia), Yogyakarta, and Editor in Chief of the newsletter and teaches several courses on Islam, interreligious dialogue and peacebuilding.

She was grateful to have been a member of the Fellows Programme, not only because of the trainings, but because of the interaction she had with fellow practitioners from all over the world.

“I have (and will always) learned from the experiences and knowledge of other Fellows, especially with regard to interreligious dialogue activities. Their experiences have inspired me to develop my activities in the future.

From them, I learned a lot about the importance of context, local and national, as well as international, in designing and conducting a dialogue.

I also learned a lot about the challenges and obstacles faced in the work of the dialogue and how to deal with it.”

She hopes that IRD will become a civil society movement that will help to mitigate violence and to solve interreligious conflicts.

“Interreligious work is indispensable because there are more and more problems of humanity that must be faced together by religious communities working together. Additionally, radicalism and religious fundamentalism became stronger, therefore, it is urgent to promote interreligious dialogue and interreligious education together in interreligious network.”



As part of her Fellows initiative, Wiwin and 25 members of Srikandi Lintas Iman, a new network for interfaith young women in Yogyakarta, visited sacred sites. In the photo, she is at a Catholic cemetery in Yogyakarta / Photo: Wiwin Rohmawati

# MANAGING RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY THROUGH DIALOGUE IN YOGYAKARTA

August - November 2015

**A**mid the interreligious tensions and conflicts in the city of Yogyakarta and in other parts of Indonesia over the past two decades, Wiwin Rohmawati is leading an initiative that invites young women from different religious backgrounds to engage in interreligious activities. The participants worked together and learned from one another about managing religious diversity in a pluralistic society. They focused on how women can make a difference by playing an active role in creating harmony, security, peaceful coexistence and preventing conflict in their society.

## OBJECTIVES

**1** To provide a safe space for an interreligious group of young women to meet, get to know each other and share their knowledge and experiences in a meaningful encounter

**2** To raise awareness on the challenges and promises of religious diversity in society

**3** To build an interreligious network in Yogyakarta that will reach out to the wider public

## OUTPUTS

During the training, Wiwin witnessed good will and commitment from the participants to convey IRD values and principles and disseminate knowledge within their respective communities.

## IMPACTS

The 24 alumni of Wiwin's two-day workshop on "Revitalization of the Interfaith Young Women's Role in Managing Religious Diversity in Yogyakarta" were able to establish a new network for young women interested in interreligious cooperation in Yogyakarta called Srikandi Lintas Iman. (The Interfaith Srikandi of Yogyakarta) - Srikandi is a popular heroine in Indonesian folktale. This new community communicates through social media platforms (they have created a WhatsApp group and a Facebook page under the same name) and has conducted a series of visits and dialogue with six different religious communities in Yogyakarta.

The visits involved university students and many other beneficiaries. Additionally, a follow-up meeting was conducted to evaluate and to reflect on Srikandi (August - November). They also conducted a peace rally to celebrate International Day of Tolerance on November 21, 2015.

Wiwin is passionate about interreligious dialogue and the role of women in peacebuilding. Her participation in the KAICIID Fellows Programme helped her realise her goal of implementing her project. "Through the first and second training of KIFP in Vienna and Kuala Lumpur, I gained more knowledge and skills on how to develop and organise IRD programmes with a focus on the role of women, which helped me in the implementation of this project."



## MESSAGES FOR WIWIN



“ Wiwin Rohmawati, with her characteristic beautiful smile, goes out to the people of all faiths, especially women, and inspires them for peacebuilding and fellowship. She has enormous creative power and takes daring and smart initiatives with good thinking and great faith. She is committed to dialogue and friendship and takes all the possible roles – researcher, trainer, editor, programme officer, teacher, executive secretary and senior staff member. She is passionate about interreligious dialogue and works hard, willingly, and lovingly. Listening to her stories I am reminded of the words of Jesus: “Everything is possible for one who believes” (Mark 9.23). ”

Rev. Fr. Jose Nandhikkara



“ It sounds contrary to say, but Wiwin “stands out” for her quiet friendliness. This does not mean that Wiwin is not an energetic advocate for interreligious dialogue – quite the opposite. We were fortunate that Wiwin shared about her experiences in the field prior to the KAICIID training both in class and out. ”

Janani Chaitanya



“ Wiwin and I had an immediate connection through a common experience – Philadelphia. Although we did not know one another during our time living there, when we met in Vienna, I felt as though I already knew her. In my understanding of Wiwin, she is a strong, driven woman, who uses her vision, smartness and intuition to address the needs of her community. I am inspired by her work with women, often the quiet power behind change. She is always smiling, and when I am with her, I feel the love that she exudes as a mother, as a Muslim, and as a human being with concern for others. I can credit her success to the great love she has in her heart, a love that she shares with all around her. ”

Jessica Sitek




“ I have really enjoyed getting to know Wiwin and working with her. She invited me to contribute to a publication on pluralism which was published by her institution in Indonesia. I hope that we continue to have a meaningful dialogue and learn from each other. She is doing such great work in bringing together many faith communities in Indonesia and to promote the study of comparative religion. I love Wiwin’s energy and what I think it is her belief in the possible. ”

Rev. Alexander Goldberg

“ Wiwin, thank you for the hard work you do, for the cheerfulness you add to people around you, for being very friendly and going out of your way to make others feel cared for and safe. You gave me a responsibility when you asked me to get some medicine for you and help with your health. That day made me reflect on how we look out for each other. Thank you for trusting me with your health. ”

Nageeba Hassan



# Sayyed Ali Mohammed Taqi Al-Khoei

Languages: Arabic, English, Farsi  
Religious Affiliation: Islam  
Institutional Type: Religious  
Organizations: Al Khoei Institute  
Expertise: Islamic Studies  
Country: Iraq  
City: Najaf

## “IF SOMEONE IS NOT YOUR BROTHER IN FAITH, HE IS YOUR BROTHER IN HUMANITY”

**S**ayyed Ali Khoei may be KAICIID’s youngest inaugural Fellow, but don’t call him inexperienced. The Shia teacher and researcher from the holy city of Najaf has overcome tragedy and exile to follow in his family’s footsteps as one of Iraq’s most dedicated champions of interreligious dialogue.

After the death of his grandfather and father in the early 1990s, Ali was forced to Iran and the U.K. for his own safety amid Iraq’s ongoing political turmoil. He returned to Najaf in 2010 to continue his seminary studies and to begin lecturing on Islamic jurisprudence. Encouraged by his late uncle and brother, heads of the Al Khoei Foundation and Institute, he embarked on a series of interreligious journeys to Baghdad, Tehran, Amman and London, even stopping by the Vatican for a visit with Pope Francis before joining the KIFP in Vienna.

Ali now serves alongside his brother at the Al Khoei Institute in Najaf. There he leads the Al Balaghi Interfaith Academy, named after an open-minded 20th century Shia scholar and cleric who broke convention by learning Hebrew and English to teach local seminary students about Christianity and Judaism. In Ali’s view, Iraq could use another Al Balaghi.

“My Shia friends used to live peacefully with our Sunni and Christian brothers. Now, because of the violence here in Iraq, a lot of people say those of other faiths and religions are disbelievers and enemies. But Iraq is a multireligious and multicultural country. Even if someone is not your brother in faith, he is your brother in humanity.”

As the so-called Islamic State continues to terrorize Iraq and its neighbours, Ali wants Najaf and the Al Khoei Institute to be a bastion of interreligious



harmony, education and enlightenment. The Institute's 11-storey buildings with conference halls, guest rooms, an 800-capacity prayer room and a library large enough to hold 1.5 million books will officially open in September 2016. Ali's KIFP initiative gave some of Najaf's 13,000 Shia seminarians a sneak peek at what's in store.

"At our interfaith institute, we want a Catholic to come teach his faith through his lens, a Jew to teach Judaism, an Orthodox Christian to teach Orthodoxy. We want to bring all faiths to teach about their own religions so that we can learn how to live together."

Ali's initiative in the summer of 2015 brought together more than 80 local seminary students to learn from Sunni and Christian teachers about their faiths. The sessions emphasised conflict resolution to promote tolerance, minimize hatred, and end the abuse of religion as a justification for violence. In the process, Ali encouraged students to become vocal advocates for peace and reconciliation.

"At the beginning of the initiative, some of the seminary students and teachers asked, 'what's the point of bringing faith leaders to teach their own faiths. Can't we just read their texts?' I told them that bringing a Christian

to live with us lets us learn more than just his beliefs. We see that he is an honest human being, just like us."

Ali was surprised by some of the criticism he heard and wondered whether anyone would come to the trainings. In the end, his worries were for nought.

"Everyone was mocking me and making jokes, but

**"With the fear of ISIS, many people now see this big gap between faiths. I want to help bring people back together. We are all in the same country, all of the same creator, all God's creation. We have to work together."**

a lot of seminary students came and wanted to learn. Now when these students travel, they will know about other faiths. If they go to the Vatican, they will know the history of Christians, they will know about saints and the Pope, they will know the difference between Catholic and Anglican

and Protestant. We as Shia blame everyone for writing about us without coming to sit with us and speak about our faiths. We don't want to misjudge others by doing the same. We want scholars to come teach about their faiths and to learn about ours."

As home to the Imam Ali Shrine, one of Shia Islam's holiest sites, Najaf attracts thousands of foreign visitors and students who want to learn more about the faith. Ali teaches some of these seminarians in English at the mosque and Iraqi students in Arabic at the nearby Institute.

Sayed Ali Mohammed Taqi Al-Khoei was born on 29th of September 1988, in the holy city of Najaf Al-Ashraf, Iraq, into the family of the Spiritual leader for Shia Muslims, Ayatollah Imam Sayed Abul-Qasim Al-Khoei. After the first Gulf War, the Shi'a uprising against Saddam Hussein's regime, and following the tragic death of his grandfather, Sayyed Ali was forced to leave Iraq for Iran due to the political unrest and the constant dangers that his family faced. Sayed Ali's father was also tragically murdered along with other members of his family by the Ba'hist regime in the summer of 1994. Shortly after the murder of his father, he migrated to Iran for four years and then migrated to the United Kingdom where he finished his academic studies. He later returned to Iran where he started his Islamic studies at the religious seminary in Qom. In 2010 he returned to his hometown to continue his studies and take up the position as lecturer in Jurisprudence at the religious seminary. He currently lives in Iraq where he is studying and teaching Fiqh and Osool. He is also in charge of the Interfaith Dialogue Desk at Al Khoei Institute.

## MEET THE FELLOWS



“My goal is to teach everyone to live in peace and to know about each other. We live in a multifaith country, but Christians, Yazidis, and Mandaeans are running away. If we don’t teach Iraqis about these people, about their own roots, they will not know about their history.”

Despite regular electricity cuts and unreliable mobile coverage, Ali is now sharing the Al Khoei Institute’s lessons and initiatives online with a global audience.

“Everyone thinks Iraq is dead and overrun by ISIS. We put our work on Facebook to show Iraq and the world that there is important work happening here in Najaf. When we bring guests to Najaf, we tell everyone on Facebook to come meet them.”

More than 1,000 people came to Najaf’s University of Kufa in February to hear from Catholic Cardinal Theodore McCarrick and Episcopal Bishop John Bryson Chane, both in town from the U.S. to discuss religion and the prospect for world peace.

In the future, Ali hopes to expand his initiative by bringing KIFP fellows to Najaf to share their faiths with his students and local community.

“I would have never dreamed of speaking to a Buddhist monk or a Hindu scholar. With the

help of KAICIID, I was able to travel and gain knowledge about their beliefs. I got to learn about the five major religions of the world and make great friendships with these brothers and sisters of other faiths. It was wonderful.”

Witnessing how Malaysia’s many faiths and ethnicities live in relative harmony gave Ali hope for Iraq’s future. He plans to continue his studies at the Islamic College in London next year to advance his interreligious dialogue work in Najaf.

“With the fear of ISIS, many people now see this big gap between faiths. I want to help bring people back together. We are all in the same country, all of the same creator, all God’s creation. We have to work together.”



Sayyed Ali hosted the Iraqi Council for Interfaith Dialogue with representatives from the Sabian and Bahai faiths and high level guests from the Catholic and Anglican churches, HE Cardinal Theodore Mack Carrick and Archbishop John Brison Shane / Photo: Ali Khoei

## SAYYED ALI ISLAMIC INSTITUTE

June - September 2015

Iraq's cultural and ethnic diversity has become a basis for divisions among communities along religious, ethnic and linguistic lines. With this in mind, Sayyed Ali Khoei designed a community development and conflict resolution training that aims to promote the concept of tolerance as a tool to minimise hatred and to put an end to the abuse of religion to justify violence. The project encourages participants to generate new insights into Abrahamic religions and become key voices for peace and reconciliation at the local level. The spiritual element of the training encourages participants to look beyond their personal interests towards greater cooperation and understanding.

### OBJECTIVES

**1** To ensure that young Iraqis develop an understanding on the common roots of the three global religions

**2** To advance respect for cultural and religious backgrounds of all peoples

**3** To promote education in an environment respectful of religion

### TARGET GROUP

Sayyed Ali strongly believes that the values of religious pluralism and ecumenism need to be addressed directly and promoted on the world stage. Therefore, his project focuses on engaging students of diverse religious backgrounds in an academic environment to explore religious themes, as well as their similarities and differences. The training will be developed for postgraduate students with basic knowledge of the three Abrahamic religions. The group consists of participants from the religious seminary of Najaf with an educational background in Islamic theology and Shi'i legal studies.

### IMPACTS

According to Sayyed Ali, the Fellows Programme has affected his personal life by deepening his appreciation of the universality of humanity. Through his involvement in KIFP, he realised that learning and understanding have no limits. "You should not think you know everything, rather you should try to listen to others and learn from their experiences," he said. Sayyed Ali further explained that "we rush to judge and forget to spread peace to all, no matter our differences, and act in love because a person is either my brother in faith and/or my equal in humanity." What he appreciated most was meeting the diverse group of Fellows, because he feels that each one of them has a unique story, and is committed to making the world a better place through love and understanding. The project is an important step towards changing attitudes about religious coexistence and may help lay the groundwork for cooperatively building peace in the future. According to Sayyed Ali, "interreligious dialogue is not only pivotal in bringing relief in under-developed communities that face political crises, but it also offers people the opportunity to enrich their lives by acquiring new skills for self-sufficiency." In addition, he declares his commitment and determination to be part of such efforts and put his skills and experience at the disposal of underdeveloped and affected communities.

## MESSAGES FOR ALI



“ At a time when the public opinion too often is dominated by the stereotypes concerning Islam and its culture, Brother Ali discussed with me an immensely wide range of topics about Iraq in Vienna, February 2015. His dignified face was framed by his fine beard, and he is one young man (scholar) who combines modern Western knowledge with a study of Traditional Islam. During our conversation at a Cafe in the heart of Vienna, we shared how to know, love, and serve God with our whole mind, our whole soul, our whole heart, and the love for our neighbour as for ourselves, in the light of Sunni and Shiite traditions. What a wonderful brotherhood. ”

Yusuf Daud



“ I have met Shiite people before, but collaborating with a Shiite person who dresses and talks like the Shiite I used to see in the media, was strange. With the continuing training, one starts to realize that we all are seeking the same purpose, to build peace and stop the hatred and the bloodshed. It will be great if we could help get moderate people from both sects to meet and talk and do something positive about the war of division and hatred, and I believe that Ali can do it. I wish him all the best. ”

Nourah Alhasawi



“ When I think of Sayyed Ali Mohammed Taqi Al-Khoei, my favourite nursery rhyme comes to my mind: “How I wonder what you are!” Belonging to the family of Ayatollah Imam Sayed Abul-Qasim Al-Khoei and born in the holy city of Najaf Al-Ashraf, Iraq, he is a man of deep faith who longs for and works for peace. It is amazing for me that in spite of the tragic events leading to the deaths of his father, grandfather and relatives, the destruction of his beloved and holy city, and being forced to leave his country to live in foreign countries, he submits to the power and mercy of God, trusts people and daringly engages in peacebuilding with people of different faiths. He is equally passionate about his studies and teaching. He speaks so fondly about his family, as a devoted son, loving husband and doting father, and is every ready to give a helping hand to people who are in need. ”

Rev. Fr. Jose Nandhikkara



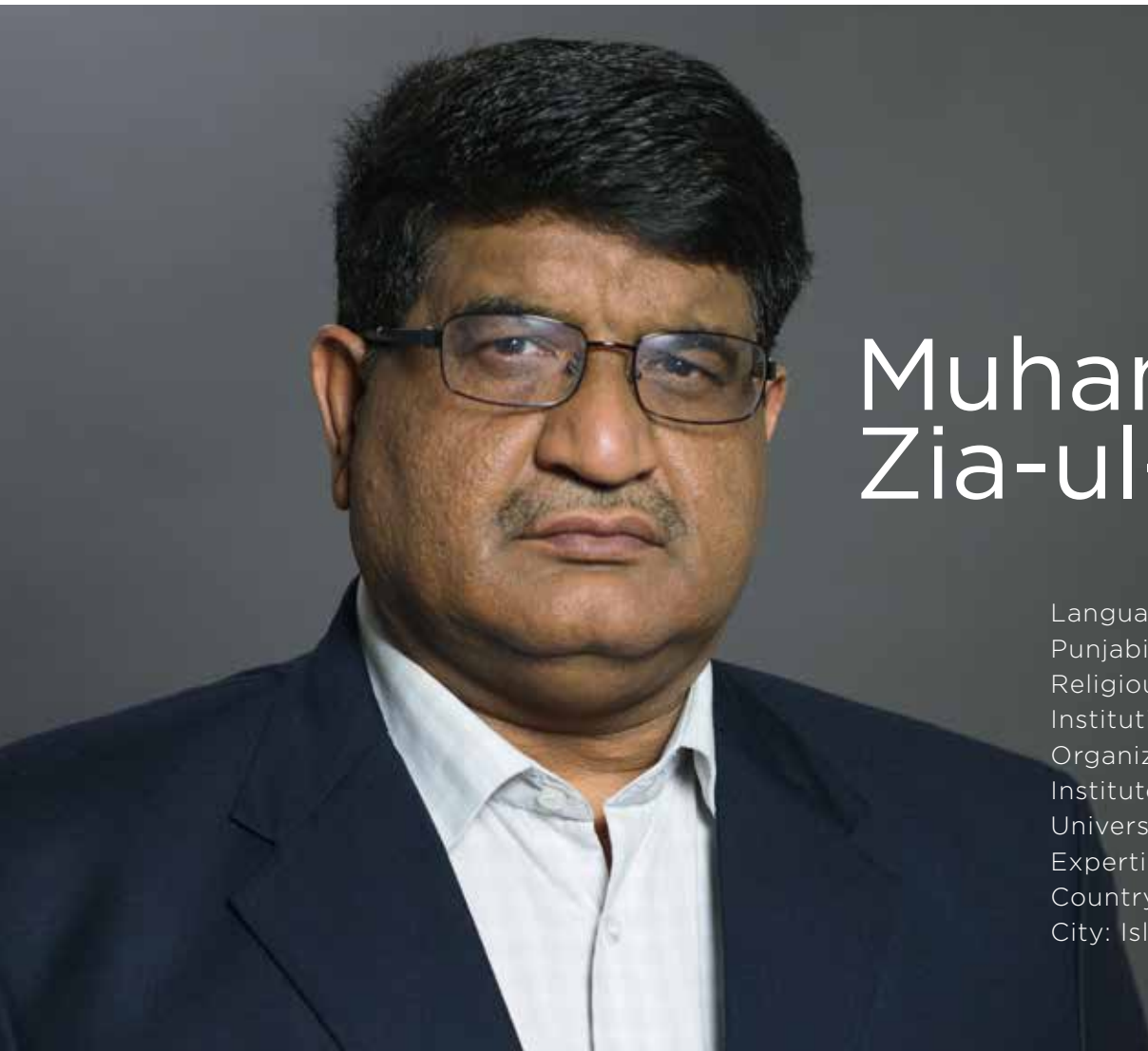
“ Ali is great. I have learnt so much from him and feel more knowledgeable about the Shia faith. I admire his work in Iraq so much, bringing together different faiths in very difficult circumstances. Ali has invited me to Najaf and I hope to go one day soon to support his initiative. It is important to rebuild community relations in a country that experiences so much conflict. Wishing all his work best for the future. I have enjoyed our coffees in London, Vienna and Malaysia. Ali will remain a lifelong friend. ”

Rev. Alexander Goldberg

“ Ali, I was scared about how you would judge me and worried about how you were judging all of us. I am the only one in Uganda who tries to reach out to the Shia but they are still reserved. I am very proud of your work, knowing that it comes from you because you believe in peace. You have taught me and emphasised my belief that we can dialogue, be flexible and build peace without compromising ourselves. Thanks Ali! PS: You look older and strict with the juba and young and charming without it! ”

Nageeba Hassan





# Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq

Languages: English, Arabic, Urdu, Punjabi  
Religious Affiliation: Islam  
Institutional Type: Academic  
Organizations: Islamic Research Institute, International Islamic University  
Expertise: Islamic Law  
Country: Pakistan  
City: Islamabad

## “THE NARRATIVE DOMINATING SOCIETY IS NOT A TRUE REFLECTION OF ANY RELIGION”

Each person travels a unique path toward embracing interreligious dialogue in the quest for peacebuilding.

Sometimes the path forward emerges after a crisis or tragedy. Other times, it's about being in the right place at the right time. For some people, it's a transformation in perspective resulting from academic, scholarly, and analytical pursuits.

For Professor Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq, it was this latter path that led this respected Islamic law scholar to see how Koranic teachings and interpretations could make a compelling case for embracing interreligious dialogue as a means to peaceful coexistence.

While preparing for a research fellowship in the United Kingdom more than a decade ago, Zia-ul-Haq studied Koranic passages about the

Prophet Muhammad's instructions on how Muslims should relate toward non-Muslims.

“I found that what these Koranic verses are talking about is not what we are hearing in stereotyped public conversations,” said Zia-ul-Haq. This research-based discovery was the start of his journey to become a global scholar into the ways Muslims participate in dialogue and relationships with people of other faiths, especially the Abrahamic faiths of Christianity, Judaism and Islam.

Zia-ul-Haq's thinking further evolved during a conference on global ethics, in which he recognised the role interreligious coexistence could play as a component in nurturing global ethical values.

Although it might not seem unusual for a Pakistani scholar to focus on interreligious dialogue as a strategy toward peaceful coexistence, Zia-ul-Haq,

48, has spent most of his adult life in an era in which the dominant narrative of how the Pakistani people related based on religion was hijacked by sectarian extremists.

Through his research, Zia-ul-Haq saw a different narrative.

“I found from looking at the life of the Prophet how many actions he took for the promotion of peace,” said Zia-ul-Haq. “These actions, many peaceful actions like his interactions with non-Muslims, like receiving non-Muslim delegations into mosques, like allowing Muslim men to have non-Muslim wives — these are actually forgotten.”

Many research projects later, Zia-ul-Haq learned about the KAICIID International Fellows Programme, which aligned with his long-term goal of improving the prospects for peaceful coexistence.

One of the most important lessons he learned as a Fellow was that you can be a faithful believer of your own religion and still participate or even advocate for sincere dialogues with people from other faiths. His work was also enriched by the specific, practical techniques of interreligious dialogue. The programme also gave him the resources to hold a successful training event in Karachi.

In his KIFP project, called “Building Peace through Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue in the Islamic perspective,” Zia-ul-Haq taught 30 seminarians and post-graduate students about peace, interreligious and intercultural dialogue, and what he called the ethics of disagreement. His aim was to build their capacity as peacebuilders and ambassadors for peace in their respective communities.

The weeklong programme, held in mid-2015 at the University of Karachi, was both scholarly and practical in nature. It included lessons on peacebuilding from the Sunnah and scholarship on the role of interreligious dialogue within Islam. Participants also learned practical skills to expand their capabilities at productive dialogue and to build new intellectual networks of support for the work.

As the senior scholar in Sharia law in Pakistan, Zia-ul-Haq is held in high esteem. His list of research and publications is impressive and long. Zia-ul-Haq’s project as a KAICIID Fellow served as an important model that informed his new efforts to broaden the audience and impact of his work. In the future he also hopes to develop a vision of how interreligious dialogue and peaceful coexistence contribute to a nation’s social and economic development.

**“We all believe that a good person can be a follower of any faith.”**

**M**uhammad Zia-ul-Haq is the Director General of the Islamic Research Institute and Professor of Shariah & Islamic Law at International Islamic University, Islamabad, Pakistan where he also served as Dean of the Faculty of Shariah and Law from 2010-14 and Chair of the Department of Shariah (Islamic Law) from 2008-2010. He was a Senior Fulbright Fellow and professor at the Edward B. Brueggeman Center for Dialogue at Xavier University, Cincinnati, Ohio from 2013-14. He holds a B.A. and an M.A. in Islamic Studies from Bahauddin University, an M.A. in Arabic from the University of the Punjab in Lahore, Pakistan; and a Ph.D. in Comparative Fiqh (Islamic Law) from the Institute Superieuer du Theologie, Ezzituna University, Tunis. He has had a post-doctoral fellowship at the University of Glasgow, U.K. and other fellowships at the University of Deusto, Bilbao, Spain and the University of Warsaw, Poland. He also taught and chaired the Islamic Law Dept. of Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad from 1999 until 2008. He specializes in Islamic Law and Jurisprudence, International Islamic Law, Islamic civilization studies, human rights from an Islamic perspective, Muslim family laws and interfaith relations and dialogue from an Islamic perspective. He has organized and presented at numerous conferences and workshops throughout Pakistan and internationally and authored dozens of research articles in Arabic, Urdu, and English including his most recent publication, Muslims Participation in Interfaith Dialogue Prospects & Challenges. He believes in the ethics of disagreement and aims to promote a culture of disagreement in an agreeable way. He is also working as the core member of the Secretariat of World and Traditional Religions Kazakhstan from 2009, representing Islam.

## MEET THE FELLOWS

A related result of his involvement as a Fellow is a proposal before the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan to allow the creation of a course book on interreligious coexistence and peacebuilding, as well as training for more than 500 school and university teachers. Through that nationwide effort, new generations of youth can learn the counter narratives of peace and interreligious coexistence, especially from a Muslim perspective, Zia-ul-Haq said.

The work has not been carefree for Zia-ul-Haq, his wife and two children. “It was initially very dangerous,” he acknowledged. Some colleagues even accused him of being secular or a liberal—harsh criticisms in Pakistan’s culture. “But now a majority of people are accepting this voice. The majority in Pakistan are fed up with this religious extremism.”

As evidence, Zia-ul-Haq cites a recent conference of what he described as mostly conservative leaning scholars. One topic for discussion included countering extremist narratives. “From this you can understand that conservative people, they are themselves changing. They are understanding that extremists have done so much damage,” Zia-ul-Haq said.

Zia-ul-Haq credits KAICIID, named for the late Saudi King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz, as giving credibility and visibility for the work within Pakistan of interreligious dialogue as a means toward peace. Other group’s initiatives have been interpreted as an imposition of Western values.



KAICIID avoids that pitfall. In practice, the Centre’s name creates dialogue opportunities between religious communities around the world.

He is optimistic both about the work emerging as a result of his KIFP project, but also the rapid changes in the country he loves. Also, although he is recognised as a leading scholar in interreligious dialogue among Muslims, because of the Fellows programme, Zia-ul-Haq feels a kinship with people from other cultures, countries and religions who are dedicated to a common goal of peaceful coexistence.

“We all believe that a good person can be a follower of any faith,” said Zia-ul-Haq. “This is wonderful and therefore I feel that anyone – Muslim and non-Muslim – needs to work together, because we recognize that the narrative dominating society is not a true reflection of any religion.”



For his initiative, Muhammad conducted interreligious dialogue workshops in Pakistan / Photo: KAICIID



From left to right: Yusuf, Muhammad and Kriya at the KAICIID Hall of Dialogue / Photo: KAICIID



# BUILDING PEACE THROUGH INTERRELIGIOUS AND INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE IN THE ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

12 - 16 August 2015

In Pakistan, religion is considered by a majority of people to be an integral part of their identity. In recent years, sectarian tensions have divided communities, caused socio-political mobilization and in many cases, led to violence against ethnic and religious minority communities. KAICIID Fellow Dr. Muhammad Zia-UI-Haq recognises that interreligious dialogue can play a crucial role in building peace and reconciliation in areas of tension. Therefore, he adopted interreligious dialogue methodologies to promote peace through his project, a non-formal graduate course that was conducted through a series of workshops. The activities intended to raise awareness of the importance of dialogue and its contribution in social and economic development.

## OBJECTIVES

**1** To enhance the knowledge of participants on the importance of dialogue and peace in the theological sources of Islam through applied examples

**2** To build on the capacity of students through developing IRD/ICD practical skills

**3** To bridge inter-religious understanding and correct misinterpretations of the concept and ethics of Islamic traditions

**4** To provide the opportunity of networking among participants of different religious backgrounds

## TARGET GROUP

In his trainings, Muhammad trained members of the next generation of religious leaders of various cultural backgrounds on peace, interreligious and intercultural dialogue and the ethics of disagreement aiming to build their capacity so that they can work as peacebuilders and ambassadors for peace in their respective environments. The training combined lectures, interactive sessions and final written exams/evaluation. The applied examples of dialogue for peacebuilding were taken from Sunnah of Prophets (Peace be upon him). The legitimacy of peace, stability and dialogue was elaborated on the basis of basic sources of Islam i.e. Koran and Sunnah.

## OUTPUTS

The training was a first step towards re-discovering the participants' religious heritage. As a result, the training created an atmosphere of respect between believers of different religions and ideologies and the adoption of an open secularism. As in all projects with relatively short timeframes, ensuring sustainability for activities was a concern. Participants committed themselves to take action in their own communities to further promote interreligious and intercultural harmony. One participant emphasised that this workshop made him appreciate the beauty of the multiplicity of forms and types of human culture and perceptions in surroundings and in the world as a whole. He concluded that "investment in similar projects is pivotal for my society."

## PARTNERS

Islamic Research Institute, International Islamic University, Islamabad • Sheikh Zayd Islamic Centre (SZIC), University of Karachi, Karachi • International Dialogue Centre (KAICIID)

## MESSAGES FOR MUHAMMAD



“ Prof. Muhammad Zia was the love of my life. I cannot really choose words to describe him. He is a very humble and funny professor but plays a pivotal role in dialogue, because he knows very well both the traditional and academic languages. Prof. Muhammad Zia makes us all proud to be people of faith. He has provided me with his insight into living together. ”

Yusuf Daud




“ He is a close friend and means a lot to me. He has seen many countries as he participated in very important conferences across the world. He has a rare ability to distinguish between religion, customs, and traditions. He has a full knowledge of the Muslim world, politically and religiously, leading him to understand the root of conflicts within the Muslim world. He analyses the terrorist ideology with magnanimity in handling it with moderation. He has inspired me in understanding the roots of terrorist ideology and in the field of moderation. ”

Mohammed Issa Alsheraifin



“ Dr. Mohammed Zia ul-Haq. His bright name has an influence on his personality. He was such a wonderful colleague and I always felt like he was my big brother, as he liked to call us, the eldest brother and the younger sister using his beautiful and compassionate Pakistani accent. I explored with him new meanings of pride, patience and optimism. I was so amazed with his curiosity to learn in which he keeps telling me about his remarkable works and researches. Every time we meet, he invites me to visit his country to spend time with his family. This is KAICID, the family house. ”

Basmah Ahmed Jastaniah



**A LACK OF DIALOGUE CAN  
COMPOUND CULTURAL AND  
RELIGIOUS INCONGRUITIES,  
PUTTING SOCIAL COHESION  
AT RISK.**

## SACRED SITE VISITS TAKE IRD BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

The KIFP trainings went far beyond the classroom when Fellows visited sacred sites and met with local religious leaders in both Vienna and Kuala Lumpur. These field trips offered Fellows an intimate look at customs and practices unique to each faith and emphasised the importance of meeting believers where they worship as part of the IRD process.

In Vienna, Fellows toured the Roman Catholic Heiligenkreuz Abbey deep in the Vienna woods and marvelled at the iconic St. Stephen's Cathedral in the city centre. They also visited the nearby Jewish Museum and got a private glimpse of the old synagogue ruins beneath Judenplatz with Chief Rabbi Schlomo Hofmeister as their guide. Several Fellows joined their Muslim colleagues for Friday prayer at a local mosque.

In Kuala Lumpur, Fellows visited Holy Rosary Catholic Church, St. Mary's Anglican Cathedral, Sri Mahamariamman Hindu Temple, Guan Ti Taoist Temple, Maha Vihara Buddhist Temple,

and Jamek Mosque. At St. Mary's, several Fellows participated in or observed the Sunday service. They also witnessed a religious street festival outside Thean Hou Temple that honoured Chinese patron Goddess Mazu, guardian of seafarers.

A trip highlight for many Fellows was their trek past playful macaque monkeys and colourful statues up the long staircase that leads to Batu Caves.

"It looked like something that came from the sky," Jordanian Fellow Mohammed Alsheraifin said of the Hindu temple inside the limestone caves perched high above Kuala Lumpur. "I kept thinking of all the people who had come here over the years. It was very moving."

The sacred site visits provided tips and strategies for reaching out to diverse minority communities and incorporating religious field visits into IRD initiatives. They also served as a fun excuse to explore Vienna and Kuala Lumpur, strengthening bonds among Fellows and across faith lines.



Sacred site visits are a key part of the Fellows Programme. These visits gave the Fellows exposure to different religious communities and cultures. Here, Galkande Dhammananda and Kriya Langputeh stand before the Batu Caves / Photo: KAICIID



Mabrouka Rayachi, Victoria Pelaez and Jessica Sitek pose in front of the monkeys outside of the Batu Cave complex / Photo: KAICIID



The Fellows visited several temples during their second training in Kuala Lumpur. The excursion to Batu Caves, a Hindu sacred site, was one of the highlights for many Fellows. Here, the Fellows stand in the main chamber of the Batu Caves / Photo: KAICIID



During the religious site visits the Fellows had the opportunity to conduct dialogues both among themselves, and with local religious community members. Here, Wiwin Rohmawati discusses interreligious dialogue at a Sikh Gurdwara in Malaysia / Photo: KAICIID



Four Fellows, Kenan Centikaya, Yusuf Daud, Galkande Dhammananda and Nageeba Hassan visit a Hindu temple in Kuala Lumpur / Photo: KAICIID



The Fellows also visited a Maha Vihara Buddhist Temple as part of the second training / Photo: KAICIID





As part of the second training, the Fellows had the opportunity to meet with representatives of the Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Taoism (MCCBCHST) / Photo: KAICIID



The Fellows met the representatives of MCCBCHST at a Buddhist temple and lunch was provided by the Sikh community / Photo: KAICIID



Wiwin Rohmawati's Fellows project brought young women from Yogyakarta Indonesia together to discuss the role of women as interreligious peacemakers and bridge-builders. The programme included religious site visits including a Catholic seminary / Photo: Wiwin Rohmawati



A guide explains the teachings of Islam to the students of KAICIID Fellow Abdul-Fattah Katende, inside of a mosque. As a sign of respect for tradition, both Christian and Muslim female students wore veils / Photo: Davies Rwabu



Mandalar Lankara's Fellows project was a training that combined theoretical and practical sessions and activities, as well as field visits to religious quarters and places of worship. Here his students can be seen in front of a Mosque / Photo: Mandalar Lankara



For his initiative, Mandalar Lankara engaged twenty youth from divergent religious backgrounds who originate from Mandalay, Myanmar, in a three-month interreligious training programme. Here, they visit a Buddhist temple / Photo: Mandalar Lankara



2015 Fellow Wiwin Rohmawati brought her group of interreligious students to a Hare Krishna Hindu Community as part of her Fellows Project / Photo: Wiwin Rohmawati

## TWO GENERATIONS, AN ENCOUNTER

The 2015 Fellows welcomed the incoming course of Fellows and shared experiences and support. The Fellows Network will continue to expand each year as the International Programme will continue to reach out to IRD practitioners all over the world. The Fellows

Programme has also expanded to three additional regional programmes that include the Arab world, Africa and Southeast Asia. Every incoming Fellow will be trained with the programme based on the International Fellows Programme and will be integrated into the Fellows Network.



The graduating Fellows welcomed the incoming 2016 Fellows course and had the opportunity to share experiences during the training / Photo: KAICIID



Mabrouka Rayachi poses with Senior Adviser, Mohammed Abu-Nimer at the final reception. From this training, the Fellows returned to their communities, many taking responsibility within their institutions as a result of their participation in the programme / Photo: KAICIID



Nourah Alhasawi and Jessica Sitek are both leading members of the Fellows Network. The Network is one of the most important benefits for the Fellows who are now depending on one another globally for counsel, best practices and moral support / Photo: KAICIID



Rev. Alexander Goldberg and Nageeba Hassan address the Fellows during the graduation / Photo: KAICIID



Janani Chaitanya shared her unique dialogue experience through her Fellows project with incoming Fellows / Photo: KAICIID



Kenan Centikaya speaks with incoming Fellow, Maria Dallacaminá about their experiences with the programme. The next group of Fellows took part in their first training while the previous year of Fellows completed their final training in December of 2015 / Photo: KAICIID



All the Fellows presented their initiatives during the graduation ceremony. In the photo, Mohammed Alsheraifin shares his experience / Photo: KAICIID



Each of the trainers spoke and reflected on their experiences. In the photo, Anas Alabbadi addresses the Fellows / Photo: KAICIID



Each Fellow was awarded with a plaque on their successful completion of the programme. In the photo, KAICIID Director General Fahad Abualnaser congratulates Kriya Langputeh / Photo: KAICIID



Janani Chaitanya speaks with incoming Fellow, Swamini Brahmajnananda Saraswati about their projects and experiences. The Fellows are now a part of a network that will continue to expand each year as more Fellows take part in the programme / Photo: KAICIID



Wiwun Rohmawati and Fr. Jose Nandhikkara exchange goodbyes in front of the Fellows project displays / Photo: KAICIID



The Fellows gather after the ceremony to exchange gifts. For many, this will not be their last visit to KAICIID, as they will return as core members of the Fellows Network leadership team / Photo: KAICIID



Galkande Dhammananda speaks with the incoming Fellows who are also working in Sri Lanka. This opportunity brought the Fellows together, and catalysed cooperation between different individuals and their institutions / Photo: KAICIID