

Peace Story

Participating University: Middlebury Institute of International Studies – MIIS

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Proposed Dates: April - August 2022

Proposed Location: (Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, Syrian residents in those countries).

Background

Since the late 21st century, the Arab Region has been one of the world's most unstable regions. Violent wars and both latent and manifest conflicts have raged almost non-stop due to ideological, socioeconomic, ethnic, and religious conflicts. According to the World Bank, youth comprise roughly 30 percent of the region's total population, which is the largest number of young people to transition into adulthood in the area's history. Therefore, engaging Arab youth in peacebuilding and sustainable development program could play a significant role in restoring and maintaining stability in the entire region as well as the world. To do so, Youth needs to incorporate the values and skills of civic education, dialogue, tolerance, and taking actions to be able to impact their community and open spaces of cooperation.

In the last 5 years, I have been working on peacebuilding especially on the youth in participation in the Peace-building process in different capacities such as trainer, project leader, and coordinator. Also, I have been selected as UNAOC Young Peace Builder with other young activists around the MENA region to create a platform for people from different racial, cultural, religious, and socio-economic backgrounds to come together to create positive social change in their communities. These people work together across their lines of difference and defy the stories of fear and hate reported in the media. To build a positive narrative in a very challenging region, we need to equip young change-makers with comprehensive support from skills, mentorship, exposure, and financial support.

Proposal

The Peace Story program is designed to support young people in gaining skills that can enhance their positive role in issues of positive peace and prevent violent conflict. It also brings visibility to the initiatives and projects initiated by young people to promote diversity and dialogue in their community through art such as using storytelling, forum theatre, experiential program. The program is targeting 25 youth aged from 18 to 25 to raise awareness and take action tackling the most critical peace issues in the region through thematic training, experienced speakers, and non-traditional learning methods combined with intensive workshops on projects creation and completion and pitching it alongside connecting with other active peers and building cultural exchange knowledge. The program will focus on young people with fewer opportunities and marginalized communities in each targeted country, focusing on Syrian refugees in Lebanon, Egypt, and Jordan. Those counties were chosen due to their peace-related challenges and their young population. Especially in Lebanon and Jordan, there are lots of issues of Syrian refugees' inclusion in society. Also, in Egypt, there are sectarian/political clashes and refugee inclusion. The program will be online and hybrid activities. By the end of the training, the participants will receive a seed grant of 250\$/project from our partner (Peace First) and mentors to implement their action/project participants.

The program will be coordinated from Egypt and with our partner in Lebanon and Jordan and Syrian organizations in both Lebanon, Jordan. In each country, youth groups will connect all and work together on the topics and skills, and also, they will have separate training times to discuss how they will implement their projects in their context.

Throughout the project, different types of arts such but not limited to storytelling, music, oppressed theaters, and photography, enhance the ability of young people through different types of arts. Building on what we have; it's not a single method to promote peace, it's a diverse platform, every one of us has a certain thing he is good at, has his way to tell his impact stories; either through writing, online advocacy, theater or video shooting and editing; (promoting for diversity through diversity!).

Project Goals

- Facilitate 5-day comprehensive training for 25 youth on peacebuilding, art, and initiative planning.
- Support 5 projects out of the training one Peace Action project out of the workshop.
- Conduct a one-day online conference to highlight young people's projects for policymakers, NGOs leaders and a wide audience of Young People to get inspired.
- Creating a youth community platform for change-makers to further cooperate after the program.

Partnerships

- I plan to secure partnerships with regional NGOs and local ones across the targeted countries to support young people's training and ideas after the training.
- Peace First.
- Ambassador for Dialogue in Jordan and Egypt.
- Local youth-led organizations (Agents 4 SDGs in Egypt, Farah in Lebanon).

Implementation plan and Timeline

Date	Activity	Description
April –June	Developing a curriculum	With the help of youth experts from the region, we develop a comprehensive and contextual curriculum.
June	Conducting the 5-days training program in a hybrid and online format.	Each group has a facilitator in their countries and all the groups are connected online. Topics (injustices, identity, tolerance, peace through arts, project planning, budgeting, and implementation. Through the training, participants will be connected, interacting, and working with their peers in other countries through online activities. Also, they will have the opportunity to have time tighter in each country to discuss their context and how to implement their project with their mentors.
July	Applied learning	Implementation of a personal peace initiative: participants are guided by mentors and funded by Peace First partner and stay connected through the online platform
August	One day online conference	The conference will highlight our beneficiaries' stories and projects and the participation of policymakers. Those policymakers include but are not limited to NGO leaders, government officials, and international organizations representatives. Also, it will be open for other youth from the region to get inspired.

Sustainability

The project will be sustained by supporting youth to get funding and mentorship to implement projects in their community. Through partnering with Peace First organization, we will make sure the participants have sustainable access to mentorship and further opportunities for supporting their projects. The goal of the implementing partnerships is to provide support for the projects through their spaces, mentorship, and legal support.

Also, the curriculum will be open source for the alumni and partners to use as a multiplier of the training in their communities. Through this step, the project sustains knowledge sharing. Moreover, Alumni will have a platform to stay connected to the program and we can check periodically on the network and what their needs are. Finally, I planning to do research for my graduation on the role of youth in civic engagement and hope to check again the project as a case study.