

## **Connect Global US-MENA: Week Five Report**

### **Main Activities and Group Dynamics:**

This week, participants completed their fifth sessions. Some students started with icebreakers while others opened the session with reminders and summaries of discussions from week four. Then, they engaged around the Sharing Circles activity. This was an opportunity for students to open up and share personal stories and experiences in a deep and powerful way and reflect on how the differences and similarities affect the way they perceive one another. During the activity, facilitators encouraged participants to practice active listening and ask good questions that will allow them to learn more from their peers. After the Sharing Circles activity, some groups continued exploring topics from previous sessions on a much deeper level while others agreed on new topics. Some shared thoughts on current events and how they have been affected by the second wave of the pandemic while others discussed traditions, values, social norms and cultural misunderstanding. Towards the end of the session, facilitators reminded participants of the Program's key assignments and deadlines.

Outside of the sessions, participants submitted the second set of final project interviews. Before submitting the videos, participants collaborated in smaller groups to agree on the questions they used in the videos.

Last week, most facilitators reported that the group dynamics were good or excellent. In most groups, facilitators reported how they took a step back as participants took ownership over the dialogue process and the choice of topics.

### **Attendance and Technology:**

This week, we noticed a small, 10% increase in student attendance. Thank you so much for following up with students and for your constant support on that front. That said, we still need your continued support in reminding your students to attend the remaining three sessions of the Program, given that we are still seeing almost 20% of students absent from their sessions.

As for technology, we have implemented additional fixes and as a result, there was a significant decrease in the number of groups that were affected by the platform issues. This means that most students were able to access their meeting rooms and attend their sessions fully. In a small handful of groups, we saw outages of 10-12 minutes, and students were able to connect to their sessions after that. We are continuing our efforts to investigate the issues, support the affected groups and provide immediate assistance to students who reach out to us for help. Please do ask your students to write to [student-tech@soliya.net](mailto:student-tech@soliya.net) immediately if they're unable to login to their session, so that we can provide timely support.

### **Next week:**

Next week, students will delve into free-flowing conversations that will allow them to engage with difference more constructively. Some students will continue conversations about current events and media while others will explore environmental issues and stereotypes on a deeper level. In addition to the conversations, participants will take time to share thoughts about their final projects and reflect on each other's videos.