

Connect Global US-MENA: Week 2 Report

Main Activities and Group Dynamics:

This week, participants completed their second sessions. Some groups opened their sessions with icebreakers of their choice while others engaged in the identity activity and learned more about each other's backgrounds. After the opening activities, groups explored social and global issues on a deeper level. Some groups shared their thoughts about gender inequalities in their own countries while others lead free-flowing conversations about current events and how it is affecting their personal lives. Many facilitators reported how participants from different cultural backgrounds shared similar views and life experiences especially in the way they are dealing with social distancing caused by the pandemic.

After the discussions, groups started working on their final projects. Participants picked the topic they will discuss during their interviews and developed the first question they will ask the community members they will interview by the third week of the program.

This week, most facilitators reported that the session dynamics were good or excellent. Though some students still need more time to feel comfortable and share their opinions more openly, facilitators reported how several groups are making progress. Participants avoided shallow discussions and started developing interest in each other's backgrounds. During the sessions, facilitators described how participants were developing their listening skills and reflecting tolerance in the way they share feedback.

Attendance and Technology:

Although we noticed a slight improvement in this week's attendance, a large number of students were absent. Given the current circumstances, our technical team reported how some students are facing internet issues that affected their attendance. Our technical support team is providing constant help to students who reach out while facilitators are making sure group dynamics are not affected by technical issues.

Next Week

During the third week of the program, participants will dive into a group selected topic. Students will practice asking good questions and discover how they will impact the dialogue process. Enabling students to pick their topics is a way to reinforce an active learning process and encourage them to take the lead over the dialogues.

Outside of the group sessions, students will conduct their first set of interviews. With the help of the community members they selected this week, participants will submit their recordings that will be uploaded on the virtual exchange platform by Thursday, April 2nd. Students who are unable to conduct direct interviews were presented with alternative options.