

## Week 1 Report

### What Other Groups Did & Group Dynamics

After overcoming some initial technical issues, most groups reported a successful first week of dialogue and good levels of student engagement. Groups began by getting to know more about each other through the introductory activities that they completed during the first asynchronous week on the Soliya blog. They also did icebreaker activities to build comfort with the medium and with each other. Then, students began the Identity Activity, which allowed them to examine their respective identities and engage in discussions on issues such as identity development, audience-based changes, and identity threat. Despite some initial choppy momentum as students familiarized themselves with the form of dialogue and the ins and outs of the Soliya platform, facilitators shared that most students quickly overcame their hesitation and began openly sharing with their peers and asking each other questions. Some students continue to be shy or hesitant to engage with the group, and we'd like to ask you to encourage your students to actively engage in the discussions.

After reviewing administrative topics such as the structure of the Program, student assignments and the roles of facilitators, most groups began discussions around the nature of dialogue itself, and examined what dialogue is and how it is different from debates, discussions, etc. This led to great conversations around the goals of dialogue (e.g. active listening with the purpose of understanding the other), what is needed for dialogue to succeed (e.g. the importance of self-reflection), and the roles of individuals in the dialogue process (e.g. asking good, open-ended questions). In most groups, these topics also led to conversations on students' expectations and concerns as participants in the dialogue. It also helped them set up some ground rules for their future interactions based on respect and understanding.

### Attendance & Technology Update

As is typical of the first sessions, students' attendance was low last week with around 20% of students absent. Fortunately, all groups in which students were absent had the critical mass of students necessary to have effective dialogue, but **if any of your students were absent last week, we'd like to ask you to encourage your students to ensure they are attending all their remaining sessions.**

Though a number of groups had a slower start due to students' technical issues, we're happy to report that technical issues were relatively low in the past week – compared to the first weeks of previous semesters. The majority of issues were resolved in-session and students who experienced difficulties due to mic and connection problems at the beginning of their respective sessions were able to participate smoothly for the duration of their sessions. Our tech team will be in touch with those whose technical issues were not resolved in-session and will also be in touch with your technical coordinators to address any technical problems with the computers at the respective university labs.

### This Week

This week, students will discuss **the first set of required readings** in which students are presented with expert views and global trends on what constitute the most pressing global risks and social challenges, and collaboratively identify what they think are the most pressing challenges in the world. Students will then go on to collaboratively explore what they see as important global challenges, with particular focus on key differences that cause conflicts, both globally and within communities. In each group, they will then discuss what they see as the most important issues and use these to determine their agenda of discussion topics for the remainder of the semester.