

## Week 7 Report

### What Other Groups Did & Group Dynamics

Facilitators continue to report great dynamics in all groups this week, with many adding that their students are demonstrating the skills they've acquired over the semester. They report that students are being honest, are willing to raise controversial issues and are challenging each other in respectful, constructive ways. Students are also learning to work through the tensions without prompting from their respective facilitators and are actively engaging critical thinking skills in their discussions.

Discussions branched out in many directions, based on each group's individual interests, and groups had free-flowing conversations on a range of topics, including the role of third parties in the Israeli / Palestinian conflict, gender equality and gender roles in different societies, and the role of media in different countries and its impact in shaping public opinion and discourse in different societies. Facilitators highlighted that in many groups, students concluded the day's discussions by reflecting on their Connect Program experience and how it has impacted, as well as looking at ways to take this experience to their lives outside Soliya.

### Attendance & Technology Update

We're happy to report that the technology in groups continues to be steady, with very few unresolved technical issues disrupting the sessions. We have seen continued improvement in attendance levels, too, with around 85% of students present in their sessions this week. Thank you for your efforts in ensuring your students attend their sessions! **Since next week (week 8) is the final session and in many ways the most important and memorable one, we would be greatly appreciative of you could encourage your students to attend the full, 2-hour session.**

### Next Week

Students will be using the final week of sessions to discuss any topics they have not had a chance to raise over these past seven weeks. Facilitators have asked students to reflect independently on the pressing issues and questions they would like to explore with their groupmates before the program ends, and we expect that this will bring a colorful and varied range of discussions in the group meetings.

In addition to that, facilitators are working to pull together what the students have learned through their online dialogue process. Most groups will be engaging in two different activities:

1. **Youth Empowerment activities:** Students will be talking about what they think needs to change to improve the relationship between Western and predominantly Muslim societies and then grappling with the question, "what can we – as young people – do to promote this change."
2. **Reflections & Recognitions:** Each group will take some time to reflect on the discussions and what they have learned throughout the past seven weeks. The Recognitions activity will allow students to recognize fellow group members for a variety of things- from who made them laugh the most, to whose input they most appreciated. This activity has been very successful in the past, in rounding out the students' experience and providing them with a measure of closure to the semester.