

Soliya, an international non-profit organization and implementing partner of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, is offering basic and advanced online facilitation training.

Since 2003, Soliya has been committed to improving relations between Western and predominantly Muslim societies by enabling youth to participate in cross-cultural dialogue and education. Soliya's Connect Program, a unique cross-cultural education program conducted through Soliya's web-based video conferencing application, enables university students in the United States, Europe, North Africa, Asia and the Middle East to collaboratively explore the relationship between their countries & regions with the aim of improving intercultural awareness and understanding.

Facilitators help Connect Program participants to build meaningful transnational experiences by facilitating the sharing of personal and cultural information, and helping them talk intimately about the influences—both political and personal—that shape their understanding of relations between Western societies and predominantly Muslim societies.

Recognizing the key role that quality facilitation plays in enabling constructive cross-cultural dialogue and, more broadly, in how we deal with conflict, Soliya designed trainings that teach facilitation and conflict resolution skills that are applicable to a variety of conflict situations as well as the unique experience that the Connect Program offers.



- **100%** of facilitators state that serving as a Soliya facilitator provided them with facilitation skills that they can use in other settings.
- **92%** of facilitators state that serving as a Soliya facilitator provided them with leadership skills that they can use in other settings.
- **95%** of facilitators rate the level of training they received for the Soliya Connect Program as "high" or "very high"

Why Facilitate?

Through their experience with Soliya, facilitators gain:

- Hands-on experience facilitating international cross-cultural dialogue;
- Personalized feedback and coaching on their facilitation skills and style;
- Extensive training relevant to both in-person and online group facilitation;
- An opportunity to work closely with a co-facilitator from across the globe and to be part of an extraordinary international team of volunteers;
- Experience working with a growing international non-profit organization;
- **NEW Certificate! Soliya's facilitation training is now endorsed by the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC).** Applicants who have successfully completed the facilitation training and facilitated for one Connect Program semester will receive Soliya facilitation training certificates endorsed by the UNAOC.



While Soliya's facilitation training is rich and practice-heavy, past trainees consistently note that the practical application of these skills acquired by facilitating for the Connect Program was critical to their development as facilitators. Trainees that excel and are recommended to facilitate by their trainers, will have the opportunity to facilitate for Soliya.

For further information about the program, please see Soliya's website at www.soliya.net.

Here's what past facilitators have to say about the program:

[Serving as a facilitator] really solidified my commitment to the idea that this kind of on-line dialogue is vital and really impactful and I will be working to expand it so it becomes more common practice in schools everywhere.

- Male, American

It helped me being more flexible to the needs of the students. I can improvise better. It helped me to also understand and encourage people with whom I disagree.

- Female, German

Through the Soliya Connect Program I've become part of a great network of facilitators, educators, business people, artists, and activists. It's been a fantastic opportunity to tap into and connect with the energy and creativity of Soliya folks worldwide.

- Female, American

Facilitating reminds me to reflect on my own perspectives.

- Female, Moroccan-American

[The best thing about facilitating for Soliya this semester was] getting to know young people from all over the world and working with a co-facilitator towards achieving understanding between people from the East and the West.

- Female, Tunisian

Through the training offered by Soliya, and the weekly sessions themselves, I have been able to improve my facilitation ability as well develop useful skills that will inform and assist me in a professional capacity later down the line.

- Male, Canadian

[The best thing about facilitating for Soliya this semester was] building relationships based on a sincere desire to understand one another.

- Male, Lebanese

Soliya's feedback and training sessions allowed me to interact with people who I would normally not have had a chance of meeting or dealing with. Moreover, the facilitation experience helped me better cope with both mediation and dealing with new dialogue technologies.

- Male, Egyptian

Basic Training:

Occurs twice a year, in the spring sometime between March and May and again in August. Basic Trainings are held over a 4--5 week period and consist of a mixture of online sessions, readings, and multimedia resources. All Connect Program Alumni can take a basic training if they are interested; simply indicate that you are an alumni and your university in your application. If you are not an Alumni but feel that you need more of a foundation in intercultural dialogue/facilitation or want to see what Soliya facilitation is all about, please indicate this preference in your application.

Advanced Training:

Occurs twice a year, in the summer June/ July and again in the fall October- December. The fall advanced training is a 9-10 week training during which you meet your group once a week for 2 hour sessions. The summer advanced training is an intense 5 week training during which you meet your group once a week for 4 hour sessions. These trainings are tailored for applicants that have a strong foundation in conflict resolution and facilitation and are ready for more advanced and specific techniques.

Application:

If you are interested in our facilitation training, please submit an online application.

1. Go to http://soliya.net/?q=apply_to_become_a_facilitator
2. Fill in the application form that appears and click submit. You should receive an email confirming that we have received your application. If you don't receive confirmation please send an email to facilitator@soliya.net.

Deadlines for each training cycle are:

Basic Spring Training: **January 24th**

Basic August Training: **June 24th**

Advanced October - December Training: **Aug. 24th**

Advanced Intense Format June - July Training: **April 24th**

Please note:

- For all trainings, the weekly day and time that trainees meet with their groups is tailored to fit each trainee's schedule.
- All applications are subject to review by Soliya to determine training level placement, even if a preference has been given.
- If you start with the Basic Training, you must complete Advanced Training as well before you are qualified to facilitate a Connect Program semester
- All meetings take place online, using Soliya's customized internet-based interface. All that is needed to participate is a web-cam and headset and a high-speed internet connection. Facilitators can work from home, school or their office – wherever they have access to the above!

Soliya is an NGO with offices in New York and Cairo, and a partner of the UN Alliance of Civilizations. It runs the **Connect Program**, a semester- long program integrated into university courses at over 100 universities worldwide. The program facilitates dialogue between students, using an Internet- based video-conferencing platform, rigorous curriculum, and the latest in international education pedagogy. In 2011 Soliya's Connect Program was endorsed by the Education & Scientific Research Department of the League of Arab States.

The Goal

Soliya is developing a new generation of leaders with the cross-cultural knowledge, international relationships and communication, collaboration and new media skills they need to promote constructive engagement within and between their societies.

How it works

Participants enroll through an accredited course at a participating University. They meet online for two-hour sessions each week in multicultural dialogue groups of 8-10 students, guided by 2 highly trained facilitators. Together they engage with topics complementing academic courses in diverse subjects including Media Studies, International Relations, and Political among others.

Connect Program Learning Goals:

- Practical skills which are transferable to the workplace, including:
 - Leadership;
 - Critical thinking;
 - Cross-cultural communication & teamwork;
 - Media literacy, production & editing;
- Vast array of insights and opinions from other youth on global issues and international relations
- Empathy and understanding of other cultures and societies through direct engagement with students from around the world
- Genuine relationships across borders

Universities receive:

- An easy to integrate program that enhances existing curricula and offers students key skill-sets;
- Partnerships with universities across the Middle East, North Africa, Europe, and U.S.;
- Evaluation of student participation in our program



The Technical Platform: (image above)

Soliya's custom built application allows much richer and more intimate exchange between students than traditional group-to-group video-conferencing. Participants need only a computer, high-speed connection and webcam to participate.

Where the program is running:

Afghanistan, Bahrain, Belgium, Denmark, Egypt, Finland, France, Germany, Indonesia, Italy, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Netherlands, Norway, Pakistan, Palestinian Territories, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Switzerland, Tunisia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States, Yemen

Evaluation Process:

The Connect Program is extensively evaluated by a team from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, led by Professor Rebecca Saxe, allowing us to robustly assess student attitude change and skill development.

Sample Evaluation Results include:

% of students who agreed that they had **a lot in common with their counterparts** from other region:

Prior to the program: **44%** of students

After the program: **75%** of students

% of students who rated their ability to **critically analyze global issues** as high or very high:

Prior to the program: **50%** of students

After the program: **71%** of students.

Evaluation Results

Working closely with the **Saxe Cognitive Neuroscience Lab at MIT**, we evaluate the educational impact of the Connect Program with a focus on Empathy and Understanding, 21st Century Skills such as Critical Thinking, Cross Cultural Communication and Collaboration Skills, and Empowerment and Activation.

Students

90% are glad to have participated in the program and would recommend participation in the Connect Program to their peers

82% agree that participating in the Soliya Connect Program helped them clarify what they think and feel about issues that are important to them

▲ **25%** increase in having a good understanding of their counterparts from other regions, and recognizing they have a lot in common with them

▲ **25%** increase in having challenged media representation about the relationship between Western and predominantly Muslim societies

90% shared information about what they were learning with their peers and other people in their community

▲ **25%** increase in speaking out or acting to promote awareness about an issue related to the relationship between Western and predominantly Muslim societies after participation in the Connect Program

▲ **30%** increase in knowledge of the relationship between Western and predominantly Muslim societies

30% of Connect Program alumni go on to participate in our facilitation training program after completion of the program as an indication of their desire to continue to be engaged around these issues

“The Soliya program was phenomenal in terms of its impact on the students' capacity to engage, learn, and quite frankly, be transformed [...] Across the board, all of the students displayed a heightened consciousness of the diversity and multiplicity of perspectives. [...] the aim is to open up minds and spur young people to taking their responsibilities as global citizens more seriously”

-Dr. Junaid S. Ahmad, Lahore University of Management Sciences, Pakistan

“Your program is an invaluable window into direct cultural exposure with this other; often resulting in positive engagement with issues that often menaces their daily lives. [...] The "Connect Program" offers sustained cross-cultural exposure over longer periods of time. And it has been very fruitful. So, thank you for offering this program to a community of middle and low-middle class students who are in need to see others as they really are; human beings sharing common fear, love and hopefully understanding.”

-Dr. Osama Madany, University of Menoufeyya, Egypt

“It is fine to talk about theories about “engaging the other” or “increasing understanding across cultures”, but Soliya puts the students on the front lines on intercultural relations. They will learn more about themselves and their place in the world in the Soliya sessions than in a semester in International Relations classes.”

-Ambassador Cynthia Schneider, Georgetown University, USA

“The Soliya element was crucial to the students' understanding of the Arab world and of the religious element in particular. [...] Their eyes were opened to a reality with which they had previously had no contact, except through the media. They discovered through direct contact with young people of their age the events and emotions associated with the realities of the Arab world. In short, Soliya is my students' window on the Arab world and is simply indispensable in that context.”

-Dr. Robert Crane, École Nationale des Ponts et Chaussées, France

Professors

97% say Connect Program helped them accomplish the goals for their course

89% say Connect Program enhanced the quality of discussions in their class

90% of professors agreed that their students developed an understanding of alternative perspectives through their participation in the Connect Program

81% say students gain confidence, communication skills and critical thinking skills

88% say students gain media production skills and increase their ability to be critical media consumers

“Soliya allowed me to open the box that I was living in for a long time and see the world around me. It taught me never to judge people according to where they live or what they believe in. It made me discover my personality all over again.”

-female, University of Jordan, Jordan

“Never before have I been able to discuss such interesting topics with so many people all living in different countries at the same time. Our discussions were always really fertile and I feel that they have broaden my personal horizon a lot.”

-female, Basel University, Switzerland

“The best thing about the Soliya program was being able to meet and interact with people from around the world. To have a global network is invaluable in this day and age. And then to be able to have intellectual conversations within the group was priceless to our education and life perspectives.”

-female, University of Northern Colorado,

US

“[What I learned most is] To have self-confidence and to give my opinion in freely without any fear.”

-male, Al Azhar University, Egypt

“The real-time dialogue sessions gave me the opportunity to talk directly to people living in the Middle East, a place which previously seemed very different from my own environment. Media had given me some ideas about the countries they live in, but the focus on fundamentalism kept me misinformed. Getting to talk to people around my own age, showed me we actually have so many things in common, despite the many differences which are emphasized so much. Also, the safe environment created by the facilitators made sure we could freely express ourselves and so the other peoples' personal opinions could be heard, all the different views on subjects ranging from religion to media and politics taught me about how much more open-minded I need to be, and how I actually do stereotype a lot (even though I thought I did not do that as much)”