Virtual Exchange – Soliya’s learning model on cross-cultural communication
Virtual Exchange program

The context
Physical exchange programs are very costly and few people benefit from it

Unprecedented interconnectedness = opportunity / threat
• People tend to seek familiar information or information that aligns with their thinking (information silos)
• ...Or people tend to confront each other really fast (polarized unmoderated chats)

➢ Necessity to combine depth and breadth
Virtual Exchange program

• Technology enabled > higher numbers
• Facilitated and Curriculum based > more depth and structure
Virtual Exchange Program

• Around 10 000 participants from 30 countries and more than 100 universities in NA, SEA, EU, MENA:
  Georgetown University, American University, Western Kentucky University, University of Jordan, Al-Akhawayn University in Morocco, Lahore University of Management Sciences in Pakistan, University of Amsterdam, Basel University in Switzerland...

• Over a thousand facilitators trained: alumni, graduate students and Young Professionals
Meeting Title: Meeting_Room_180_1

completely
Tarek: great comment Jasmin
Jasmin: thanks
SamirNKapadia: here's that link
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election#Voter_turnout
laurie: thanks samir!
Dialogue

An uncommon conversation

• A tool for Conflict Transformation and Peace Building
  o a methodology for helping groups share perspectives and assisting organizations and communities to resolve long-standing conflicts.

• A tool for empowerment and Deep Democracy
  o enabling participants to link with each other and contribute to local, national and international affairs at various levels

• A structured and facilitated Process
Dialogue Vs Debate

Debate
- Threatening atmosphere
- Attacks
- Interruptions
- People talking past each other
- Participants as representatives
- Difference within sides are denied or minimized
- Participants stick to their opinion
- Inquiry is made as hidden advocacy
- Leading questions are asked
- Exchange happens in the frame of a dominant public discourse

Dialogue
- Safe atmosphere
- Cooperation
- Respectful exchange
- People responding to each other
- Participants speak for themselves
- Differences within sides are normal and raised
- Participants express doubts
- Genuine Inquiry is happening
- Open questions are asked
- Exchange challenges the dominant discourse and brings new options.

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How we go about this

• Philosophy of dialogue: Combining authenticity with respect, overcoming political correctness and confrontation
• Exploring intercultural tensions as well as power dynamics
• Linking cultural differences with identity mechanisms
How we differ from “Diversity Trainings”

- Not just about acquiring cultural variations literacy
- Not just about learning intercultural communication etiquette

- We are “process experts” and not “content experts”.

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What students and volunteers acquire

Attitudes:

• Inspiration, motivation and commitment to finding collaborative solutions to global issues
• Pride in one’s identity and understanding of its Relationship to the rest of the world
• Commitment to finding collaborative solutions to global issues
• Active engagement in local communities to promote cross cultural relations
What students and volunteers acquire

Skills:
• Empathy
• Communication skills
• Critical thinking
• Ability to articulate one’s own perspective clearly and respectfully
• Ability to question one’s own perspective and question those of others
• Ability to work across borders and find inclusive solutions to divisive issues
• Media literacy
Virtual Exchange Program

A discussion on religious extremism

A discussion on potential ways forward
Virtual Exchange Program

Results (participants satisfaction)

• 90% are glad to have participated in the program and would recommend participation in the CP to their peers.
• 82% agree that participating in the CO helped them clarify what they think and feel about issues that are important to them.
• 90% shared information about what they were Learning with their peers and other people in their community.
• 25% increase in having a good understanding of their counterparts from other regions and recognizing they have a lot in common with them.
Virtual Exchange Program

Impact (in partnership with MIT – Saxelab Institute):

In partnership with the Saxelab – Social Cognitive Neuroscience Lab at MIT, Soliya evaluates the educational impact of the Connect Program with a focus on Empathy, Understanding, 21st Century Skills such as Critical Thinking, Cross Cultural Communication and Collaboration Skills, and Empowerment and Activation.

Overall, the survey results were very promising showing a change among Soliya participants which was significantly greater than the change among control participants.
Virtual Exchange Program

Impact (in partnership with MIT – Saxelab Institute):

![Bar chart showing Americans' Self-Group Overlap with Muslims](chart.png)
Virtual Exchange Program

Impact (in partnership with MIT – Saxelab Institute):

![Bar chart showing impact of the Virtual Exchange Program]

- Soliya_pre
- Soliya_post
- Control_pre
- Control_post

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Virtual Exchange Program

Impact (in partnership with MIT – Saxelab Institute):

![Graph showing impact over time](#)

**Clash of Civilization Agreement**

- **Pre**
- **Post**
- **4 Months Post**

**Soliya**

**Control**

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Virtual Exchange Program

Impact (in partnership with MIT – Saxelab Institute):

![Bar Chart]

- Soliya_pre
- Soliya_post
- Control_pre
- Control_post

Americans Respect Arab Culture

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Impact (in partnership with MIT – Saxelab Institute):

![Bar chart showing Americans Committed to Finding Mutually Beneficial Solutions]
THANK YOU!

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