

**INTER-CIVILIZATIONAL YOUTH ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM  
2009 (IYEP3)**



**ETHICS AND THE GLOBAL ECONOMIC CRISIS:  
POINTERS FOR THE FUTURE**

Malaysian Institute of Integrity,  
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia  
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**REPORT**



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## **1 BACKGROUND**

**1.1 YLP** The Inter-Civilizational Youth Engagement Program (IYEP) evolved from the Young Leaders' Program (YLP) which began in 2002 "to develop a deeper understanding of global challenges and how youths can contribute toward the creation of a just world" and "to foster a closer relationship among Malaysian youths from different religious and cultural backgrounds." The YLP was one of the International Movement for a Just World's (JUST) principal activities. Following the tremendous success of the previous YLP programs, it was decided that the project be brought to the global level in 2007. The program was renamed Inter-civilizational Youth Engagement Program (IYEP) .

**1.2 IYEP** The first IYEP was held in June 2007 under the theme "Building a Universal Civilization of Peace." It was co-organized by the US based Inter-Religious Engagement Project 21 (IEP21), the World Council of Muslims for Inter-Faith Relations (WCMIR), the Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM) and The World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY), headquartered in Saudi Arabia. The second, "Green versus Greed: Youths Reflect on the Environmental Challenge", was held in the De Palma Hotel, Kuala Selangor, Malaysia from 16 to 20 November 2008. Through this program an attempt was made to engage youths in one of the greatest challenges facing humanity today. The rural venue was chosen because of the theme. The district itself offers insights into environmental issues such as the effects of climate change on coastal wildlife and also the effects of development on river wildlife and small communities as well as it being an important rice producing area.

## **2. IYEP3**

**2.1 Theme** The theme of the third IYEP was **Ethics and the Global Economic Crisis: Pointers for the Future**. It was held in the Malaysian Institute of Integrity, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia from 22 to 26 November 2009. This theme was chosen due to the fact that when the crisis hit many youths around the world felt helpless and frustrated as they did not know what they could do to ensure the economy would not go through the same freefall again.

**2.2 Venue:** The Malaysian Institute of Integrity (IIM) was a very apt place to hold the event as Ethics being part of the overall discussions.

## **3 ORGANISERS**

**3.1** This year JUST organised the event by themselves with main support coming from IIM (venue), Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM) (volunteers), and Australia based Pax Christi (airfare for 2 participants).

## **4 PRE-EVENT ACTIVITIES**

The Pre-event activities began in March 2009 with the preparation of the concept paper. The daily programme was designed to cover the main factors in the Crisis and how to view the future. Once this was finalised the call went out to past participants to graduate to the role of facilitator. Once there was a confirmed core group of 6 they were briefed on their roles and responsibilities and they started their research for the papers they had to prepare for participants.

#### **4.1 The Concept**

We put forward the following concept

Humankind is facing one of the gravest economic crises in the last one hundred years. What are the main causes of this crisis? How is it related to moral values and ethical principles? What are the strengths and weaknesses of existing economic systems when it comes to resolving the current global economic crisis? How can young people in particular help to find solutions which will ensure a sustainable, equitable economy that will serve the interests of the vast majority of humankind in the world of tomorrow?

It is because the crisis has a profound bearing upon the youth that we have made it the theme of our IYEP this time. We want young people themselves to provide new, creative ideas on how we can overcome the crisis and what sort of economy and society they would like to see in the future.

#### **The 5 day workshop**

The event is to be organised as a Global Café workshop. Each workshop will focus on one of the areas outlined below with the final day's event being a culmination of the outcomes of all 4 days.

#### **The Causes of the Global Economic Crisis.**

What are the primary causes of the crisis? Was the sub-prime mortgage crisis a symptom or the cause of the crisis? How did financial deregulation contribute to the crisis? What is the connection between the de-linking of the gold standard and the dollar and the present crisis? To what extent is the present crisis a repudiation of market based economics? Or, is it a defeat for neo-liberal capitalism? Has the global economic crisis exposed the inherent flaws in capitalism itself?

#### **Ethics and the Crisis.**

The global economic crisis has been described widely as a crisis that reveals the potency of greed and selfishness in present-day economic practices and institutions. Is this true? How did greed --- a common human failing --- become institutionalised and legitimised in both the national and the global economy? What is the impact, and what are the consequences, of greed as a social vice for the vast majority of the human family? How has the economy reinforced self-centredness or selfishness as a trait? What are the spiritual and moral values that have been eroded by dominant, conventional economic norms?

#### **Reflections on Prevailing Economic Philosophies and Systems**

Having examined the weaknesses in the capitalist system, let us now ask: what are the strengths in that system and in its underlying philosophy? How has capitalism evolved over the centuries? What are the dominant forms of capitalism prevalent today and what are their strengths and weaknesses? Are they relevant at all in the search for solutions to the present crisis? What positive role can socialism play in the current global economic crisis? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the different forms of socialism that have evolved since the second half of the nineteenth century? What led to the decline of socialism and socialist systems in the last 30 years? What were the positive and negative characteristics of societies and economies inspired by religious ideals in past centuries? What

has been the track record of contemporary efforts to establish societies and economies on the basis of religious principles and practices? Would religion be able to help humankind overcome the present global economic crisis?

### **Pointers for the Future.**

What are the important steps that should be taken today to ensure that a global economic crisis of the magnitude we are facing today will not recur in the future? What are some of the new global structures and some of the new global and national policies that should be put in place in order to ensure sustainable, viable national and global economies in the future? How would the positive elements from capitalism, socialism and religion contribute towards this new economic order? What would be the role of a universal spiritual-moral vision of social justice and human dignity in sustaining this new order? How can the youth of the world help to shape a new global economy guided by this universal spiritual-moral vision?

It would be ideal to have participants from different continents and economic systems. During the discussions by the participants, the resource person (speaker) in the relevant subject area should be present for the group to ask questions and get information they may require for their deliberations.

### **Outcome**

The workshop hopes for a number of outcomes which will encourage and inspire the youth of today to participate actively in shaping the economic future of their respective societies and indeed, the destiny of the human family as a whole.

1. News and analyses of the workshop on websites, blogs and other such channels of communication.
2. Establishment of networks amongst like-minded youth groups in different parts of the world.
3. Public campaigning on specific concerns related to the global economy.

## ***4.2 FACILITATOR TRAINING***

The facilitator training was to introduce them to the concept of world café and how to be effective facilitators as well as to introduce them to the world of economics as none were from an economics background. It was also to enable them to have time to bond and get to know each other before the event so they could work together as a cohesive group and be able to call on each other for help when necessary.

### ***4.2.1 World Café format Training***

Although approximately half of the facilitators had gone through IYEP2 either as facilitators or participants the other half were new to the idea and also the former participants didn't know what was expected of them as stewards of their respective tables. The World Café as a conversational process is based on principles that can be used to explore our deeper living process in order to develop our collective future. The World Café is about someone hosting conversations about questions of mutual interest in an often informal and friendly way. In a typical world café, a few conversations are conducted in parallel in different café tables. The café tables are often hosted by a table steward who acts as a facilitator to initiate the conversations. These conversations link and build on each other as people move between groups, cross-pollinate ideas, and discover new insights into the questions or issues that are most important in their life, work, or community. Thus the World Café helps to build the collective intelligence of a group, which can

enable people to develop effective and mutually agreed actions in pursuit of common aims. The world café concept was chosen again for this year's IYEP based on the positive feedback from the participants and organisers of IYEP2. The most important feedback being that the youths felt that their views were being heard and respected and the concept empowered them. One other important factor is that the participants know that it is their input and participation that determines whether or not the IYEP is a success or failure.. Also the concept is very informal and gives the power of conversation to the participants. In line with the end of this years theme , the tables will aim to find 'pointers for the future'.

#### **4.3 Preparation of Reading materials**

Considering the broad nature of the subject, and the involvement of the different stakeholders, reading materials were prepared for the participants before the event. The reading materials were prepared by the facilitators under the supervision of Dr. Mohd Yunus. The facilitators producing the reading materials also better prepared them to become the table stewards who would have to initiate the conversation at their respective tables. By preparing the reading materials, the facilitators were able to learn more about their subject matter, which allowed them to be better table stewards. Most of the reading materials were also well referenced so that participants would be able to access the source if they wanted to learn more about a particular area.

## **5 PARTICIPANTS**

Application forms were sent out to various organisations and educational institutions both within Malaysia and around the world.

### **5.1 Criteria**

The almost 50 participants and facilitators were chosen from the returned forms based on the following criteria:

- a. Age** As it was for the youth of the world we kept the participants age limit to between 21 -25
- b. Religion** All inclusive as we wanted to get as wide a mix as possible.
- c. Gender** Here again we tried to keep the gender mix as balanced as possible
- d. Language** The participants had to write a short essay in English on how they thought they had contributed to the World Economic Crisis. This was used to judge their command of the English language as the event was conducted entirely in English as well as to get a peek at their views on the subject.

NOTE: We were flexible with regard to age and went as low as 19 if the participant showed great interest or was of a minority group.

As in the past getting the applicants to sign up and commit was difficult, both in terms of man hours spent calling up and emailing out invitations to targeted organisations as well as in replacing those who dropped out close to the event start date. The main drawback seemed to be that organisations approached repeatedly came back with the reply that they did not know about the event when follow up calls were done to check on how many, participants they would be recommending. Another area of concern was that as our budget and logistics limits participation to 50, close to the date when participants started pulling out it was not easy to find replacements at short notice, especially if the participant was from outside Malaysia or in the minority.

### 5.3 Breakdown

The breakdown of the successful applicants (inclusive of facilitators) is as follows:

<b>Gender:</b>	Female 24	Male 22
<b>Religion:</b>	7, - Muslim, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Sikh and Ba`hai, apart from those who are not attached to any specific religion.	
<b>Nationalities:</b>	12,- American, Australian, Bangladeshi, Chinese, Filipino, Indian, Indonesian, Kosovan, Malaysian, Nigerian, Sri Lankan, Vietnamese.	

## 6. SPEAKERS

6.1 Before each world café conversation began, the participants were given a short briefing on the background of the particular crisis area to be discussed on that day. The reason invited speakers are used is to provide some factual data and references for the participants. Participants were told to keep the conversation as broadly as they liked. They did not have to discuss all the issues raised by the respective speakers if they did not want to and could also bring in their own issues if it was relevant to the table topic.

### 6.1.1 Day 1, Intro to the Global Economic Crisis : Mohd Yunus

The event began with general introduction to the Global Economic Crisis and its challenges.

#### Day 1, The Causes of the Global Economic Crisis : Dr Mahani Zainal Abidin

Dr Mahani, being well versed in global economics explained simply and clearly what had led up to the economic crisis and then went on to what triggered the freefall of the world financial markets.. She then sets and some alternative views explained some of the deeper underlying causes. She wound up by informing the participants that a ‘Rebalancing in world economies’ needed to take place and also suggested the need for regional currencies and hinted of an alternative world reserve currency.

#### Day 2, Ethics and the Crisis: Dr Rajah Rasiah

Dr Rasiah began by giving a brief overview of the crisis from an ethical point of view climate change and its cause, particularly green house gases. He then mentioned some of the scenarios of climate change such as sea level rises, floods and droughts, etc. He also gave the various opinions on the safe levels of green house gases in the atmosphere and concluded that we need to reduce our emissions drastically if we are to maintain the Earth’s current climate. He ended by giving examples of past civilisations that had collapsed due to the over exploitation of their resources.

#### Day 3, Reflections on Prevailing Economic Philosophies and Systems : Dr Terence Gomez

Dr Gomez started off by explaining to the participants that the systems could be divided into three separate areas, namely ; Developmental state, Neoliberalism and Mixed model of development. He then went on to elaborate on each individual area and delved deeper into the complexities of each . In closing he touched on the Conduct of Politics, and the Conduct of business and pointed out what past mistakes should be rectified to help ensure a more stable future.

#### **Day 4, Debate : There is no Alternative to Capitalism**

Day four took a change of pace and the participants held a floor debate on the motion 'There is no Alternative to Capitalism'. There were two panellist 'for' and 'against'. 'Against' the motion was invited guest Dr YK Chin and facilitator Mr Mahfuzur Rahman. 'For' the motion were participants Mr Muslihudeen Abdulrazaq and Ms Jessica Butcher . It was a very close vote but the 'for' won and so the motion was carried.

This was the first time a debate was included in the event and although there were many areas highlighted up that did not go well and should be changed it went well enough to fine tune it and keep it in future IYEPs.

#### **Day 5 – Alternatives for the Future: Dr Chandra Muzaffar**

Dr Chandra emphasized highlighted how now more than ever , there was a need for the youth to take a more active role in the running of their respective communities, countries and world. If the economic failures of the past were not to be repeated the youth had to start taking action to show their disillusionment with today's world financial decision makers. He also highlighted on how the spiritual element, not to be confused with religious element, of life needs to be more prominent in our leaders policy making decisions. He also spent some time going over how economic systems were implemented in run in the past and h He also commented that the world should follow Gods word not 'religions word'.

### **7 ACTIVITIES/ VISITS**

7.1 On the first night participants watched a video called Blue Gold which alerted the participants to the world water situation and how it is more and more becoming a commodity. Day 2, the participants went for some outdoor games to break the monotony of being in a hall for five days. On day 3, participants prepared and later sent a donation of food items to a group of Burmese Rohingya Refugees. Day 4 saw the participants playing a game of life size monopoly.

### **8. BUDGET / FUNDING**

Funding for this years event was very limited, partly due to the global financial crisis. Fortunately, well wishers stepped in and the event, managed to proceed. With financial donations coming from JUST and individuals, the sponsored venue, participants airfare being covered by their respective organisations and the speakers again donating their time and expertise, not to mention the volunteers with their transport the IYEP3 took place and was very successful.