



Inter-faith Impact

An evaluation of the
Cambridge Inter-faith Programme
Summer Schools 2011-13



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November 2013

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Testimonials

Some of the words used and testimonials given to describe the Summer Schools:

Amazing, Transformative, Intellectual, Exhilarating, Fascinating,
Unsettling, Galvanizing, Eye-opening, Life-changing

“CIP changed my whole perspective on the world and inter-faith dialogue, it was powerful and meaningful, and opened up new opportunities and insights into my own and other faiths. It seriously changed my life”. A white American convert to Islam, 2012

“It was a once-in-a-life-time opportunity to gathered together to learn, play, and live with people from various traditions for 3 weeks. We did not only listen to each other but were able to observe how each other live. I think it was this communal experience that impressed upon me that there is a fundamental level of human commonness that is shared across people from the three Abrahamic faiths”. An Asian Christian pastor, 2013

“Reaching out to an “other” is extremely hard – but can be extremely rewarding. The small gestures of welcome go a very long way in alleviating the fears of past generations. Cambridge sets an example that I hope will be emulated around the world.” An American Jewish student, 2012.

“When I first heard about the CIP Summer School programme I was a bit skeptical as I wasn't sure how the organizers would be able to pull off such a programme that would meet its goals of honoring all religions while allowing students to get to know each other in a manner that would allow for frank dialogue, resisting the urge to water down one's teaching, build strong friendships, and teach us how to engage with each other with our texts. Most other inter-faith programmes that I know of were not able to do any of these let alone all of them. With hesitancy I applied. Boy was I glad that I did!” Anonymous feedback, 2011

“As a Muslim chaplain, I was eager to participate in the CIP Summer School as I felt that I needed to learn more about different faiths as well as present a true picture of my own religion in a diverse and academic environment”. A Muslim chaplain in Europe, 2011

“It was possible to undertake introspection and deep reflection on troubling questions of modern life surrounded by people who were at the same time 'strangers' as well as 'siblings'.... It has also meant a brief glimpse of 'what can be' as opposed to 'what is'”. An Asian Muslim, 2012

“I do not think I could remember all what I have learn (sic) from there if I was reading that; but I do remember now because it was live and happening in front of me”. An Omani Muslim, 2012

“It's an amazing privilege that someone is willing to pay that much money to try and make people of different faiths just get a move on and stop having bloody wars around the world.” A European student, 2011

“Participating in the Inter-faith Summer School was an experience I will live to remember. Many thanks to the organizers, facilitators as well as the sponsors”. An African Christian, 2012.

“The programme pushed me outside of my comfort zone, introducing me to people and ideas with which I don't interact very often. Most of the time this was a good thing; it allowed me to grow and to build connections across difference”. An American Jewish student, 2013

“The Summer School has exceeded all my expectations. I will cherish (this experience) for a long time to come”. Anonymous feedback, 2011

Introducing the CIP Summer School

The Cambridge Inter-faith Programme (CIP) Summer School is an annual three-week programme, first held in 2011, that brings together emerging religious leaders from Jewish, Christian and Muslim backgrounds around the world for an intensive immersion encounter.¹ It is held in the beautiful surroundings of Madingley Hall, Cambridge, a 16th century manor house set in several acres of beautiful gardens.² Living in this relaxed environment allows the participants to get to know one another as they attend lectures, take part in discussions, eat together, and receive intensive training in Scriptural Reasoning (SR), the heart and foundation of the programme.³ In all this the goal is not agreement and uniformity between the faiths but rather a better understanding of difference and how to disagree well.

The School is the vision of Professor David Ford and the CIP leadership team and has been made possible by the generous support of the Polonsky Foundation and the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Endowments, Sultanate of Oman. So far 73 young emerging leaders have attended the School drawn together from almost 20 countries in North America, Europe, the Middle East, South and East Asia and Africa (see Fig.1 in Appendix). The list of countries represented includes some that are currently experiencing significant levels of inter- and intra-faith tension between communities.

A unique feature of the programme has been the annual attendance of a group of approximately 10 Omanis each year. Oman is a remarkable country in the southeast corner of the Arabian Peninsula where the dominant stream of Islam is Ibadi, a minority sect distinct from Sunni and Shi'i Islam. The involvement of the Omanis, although presenting cultural and linguistic challenges, has been one of the richest features of the Summer Schools to date.

Over the course of the 3 years the CIP team has been on a steep learning curve and the programme has already been considerably modified and improved since its inception. The 2011 programme was very much a prototype and test run. Mistakes were readily acknowledged and changes made in 2012 that significantly strengthened the SR element and saw an increased emphasis on inter-personal encounter over academic study. Following an interim report, the 2013 timetable was further modified and the programme now represents a maturing blend of SR, lectures, discussions, small group time and recreational activities.

Whilst there have been encouraging early outcomes and successes, the full fruit of the Schools will only be seen over the next 5 to 10 years as the careers of these early participants develop. This report – a short version of a longer study presented to CIP and its sponsors – is based on data from interviews and surveys conducted with the participants both during and after the School over an 18-month period. Whilst there are very positive early indicators, it is, of course, impossible to say with certainty what the long term impact of the Schools will be. Indeed, empirically, it will remain difficult to determine to what degree the Schools have been the immediate cause of future projects and initiatives. Many of the students arrive at the School predisposed to inter-faith work and may well have continued in this trajectory apart from CIP. However, it seems highly probable that the School is having, and will continue to have, a very positive impact.

¹ For more details of the programme see <http://www.interfaith.cam.ac.uk/en/education/>

² [Summerschool](http://www.madingleyhall.co.uk/) See <http://www.madingleyhall.co.uk/> for details of this venue

³ For further explanation of Scriptural Reasoning see <http://www.interfaith.cam.ac.uk/en/sr>

The participants

CIP aims to recruit young emerging leaders and the average age has been 31 with 47% being under 30 (see Fig.2 in Appendix). Over the 3 schools, despite annual variation, the gender balance has been only slightly uneven with 67% of participants being male. This has largely been due to the predominance of males in the Omani contingents although in 2013 two women from Oman participated for the first time. The involvement of Oman has also meant that Muslims have been in the majority each year, although controlling for this the balance between the faith communities has been remarkably equal (see Fig.3 in Appendix).

The students have been drawn from a wide range of contexts and backgrounds. Whilst there have been no practising Orthodox Christians or Shi'a Muslims and only one ultra-Orthodox Jew, there has been a good balance of denominational traditions across the three Schools. With one exception all of the participants have had strong religious commitments. 90% of survey respondents said that their faith was "very important" to them.⁴ Again with one exception they all attended corporate worship either daily or weekly and 93% of them read their own scriptures at least weekly. Clearly these are people for whom religion holds more than merely a passing interest. They are committed individuals who take their faith seriously.

The majority of the participants have been students, trainee religious leaders or early career professionals including clergy and teachers. Many of them (82%) reported having influence in their communities prior to attending the school, most often amongst younger people, although, as would be expected, fewer at this stage in their careers felt that they had influence with older leaders. However, there is every reason to believe that many of these individuals will go on in the future to hold positions of influence within their denominations, organizations and communities.

Whilst many of the participants have had prior inter-faith experience, not all have previously met people from each of the other communities. This has particularly been the case for non-westerners who have typically never met Jews before. In fact the encounter between Muslims and Jews – especially for the Omanis – has been one of the richest and most significant aspects of the programme.

However, with or without prior experience, all of the participants have had a predisposition and openness to inter-faith engagement. This does not mean that they do not struggle with prejudice or ill-feeling but it does mean that from the outset they have been prepared to address the issues. No-one has joined the programme from an extreme, isolationist background or with antagonistic views. Indeed recruiting such people has never been CIP's intent. The purpose has always been to recruit future influencers who will in turn speak out and bring change to their communities. The first 3 cohorts show every sign of intending to return to their home communities and participate in such transformation.

⁴ All statistics are based on those replying to surveys. For reasons of timing the 2011 cohort were only asked to complete one survey, the 2012 cohort 3 and the 2013 cohort 2. 90 surveys were completed by almost 60 different participants and total survey response was 58%. Data was also drawn from post-School evaluation forms.

The programme

It is not easy to build a balanced, sustainable timetable for such a long Summer School. The challenges faced in weighting the different elements are significant. In 2011 the timetable was extremely intense but in response to feedback was scaled back in 2012 and again in 2013. However, producing a less dense timetable with an excess of free time holds risks as the group can easily fragment into cliques and loners. A timetable needs to be more structured early in the programme to provide a framework for people to get to know each other and then can afford to be less so once mature relationships have been forged and people are secure enough to spend free time with one another.

The timetable each year consisted of SR, lectures, discussions, 'Buddy Groups' and free time. In 2011 it was quickly realised that too many lectures had been planned and these were significantly reduced. In fact, from being an unpopular part of the 2011 programme, the lectures have improved year on year. In 2012 40% of respondents to the evaluation survey described them as "very good" or better with only 3 people (14%) in that year finding them "disappointing". Approval rose in 2013 to the point where all respondents found them at least "good" with 57% finding them "very good" or better.

The introduction of more informal 'Saloon Conversations' in 2013 was also very successful although the evening time slot remained problematic with many students reporting that they felt tired and found it difficult to stay awake in the evening after a long day. The topics of these interactive conversations included conflict resolution, peacemaking and transformational leadership.

There was a greater emphasis on discussion times following the 2011 School. Some of the best of these were led by the interns who were participants returning from the previous summer. A particular highlight for many of the 2012 cohort was the presentation by the students themselves of what they felt to be the difficult texts in their respective traditions. Sensitive issues concerning violence and territory had been difficult to address in a formal setting with professional facilitators. However, in the more informal context they were raised and discussed in a mature straightforward manner.

'Buddy Groups' were reported to be a popular part of the programme by most. These are small groups which meet daily and provided a context for the participants to develop more intimate relationships and to explore questions together in a deeper way. The groups have depended on strong facilitation by the interns and others and in the minority of cases where this was not present the groups did not work so well with one group being significantly dysfunctional.

Each year trips were organised to Cambridge, London and Birmingham. The latter trip in particular was very successful as it provided an opportunity for people to meet other communities and to visit places of worship – often for the first time. Whilst some communities were more welcoming and accommodating than others, even the difficult visits were valuable learning experiences.

Finally, perhaps the most significant part of the programme was the free time when participants could interact informally over a meal, a walk in the gardens or a game of croquet. Several reported profound conversations that would not have taken place in another context. As trust built difficult questions surrounding identity, belief and politics were discussed with openness and respect.

Scriptural Reasoning

The foundation of the CIP Summer School is SR. Although most of the participants had never taken part in SR prior to the School, the majority came to appreciate and enjoy the practice believing that it would be of use in their future careers. Nonetheless, a very small minority were disappointed and there were criticisms and struggles. Some saw SR as western oriented; a few suggested it was mainly a Protestant Christian practice (despite the fact that it developed from Textual Reasoning in a Jewish context); others felt it was only for academics; and most reflected that SR would need to be adapted in some way to be of use in their particular home context.

After some early sessions describing the history and practice of SR, the students spent 90 minutes each morning in breakout groups looking alternately at short passages from the Torah, New Testament and Qur'an. Little guidance was given in the 2011 School which proved very demotivating for the students. However, this was quickly amended. In 2012 groups were guided by experienced SR facilitators and for the 2013 programme there were facilitators from each of the 3 faith communities.

85% of those who responded to the surveys described the SR sessions as either "excellent" or "very good". Almost unanimously the participants found it enriching to engage with scriptures that for many were previously unfamiliar. Some found it more comfortable reading the others' texts as they did not feel obliged to defend their own text. Others found this less comfortable and were concerned that they might give offence during the discussion. These people felt more at home reading and expounding their own text.

Before the end of the School participants were given at least one opportunity to facilitate an SR session. Leadership training is an important area that is still developing within the programme and in the future more practical advice and feedback needs to be given on these occasions.

One of the main findings of the report is that the Schools brought to light the different approaches that exist within the global SR community. For some practitioners the choosing of a topic or theme for the texts is a relatively arbitrary device which provides only a superficial link between them. The emphasis is rather on the text as a focus of conversation, as a means of understanding the other's relationship to the text and as an opportunity for relationship formation. SR is not seen as a means to gain an understanding of doctrine or come to any conclusion on a particular issue.

For others the topic chosen for the texts is a central part of the discussion and it becomes important to understand not just how others relate to and interpret their text but also to understand their approach to that particular topic. These different approaches at times left participants unsure as to the objectives of SR.

Each year the practice of reading texts together also highlighted the diverse approaches that different groups take to their scriptures. Whilst progressive traditions are comfortable to discuss and examine their texts, often in a critical manner, conservative communities are often reluctant to engage in such open discussion. For them it is unwise for individuals to express their own opinions and there is deference to traditional or expert commentary. However, over the course of the Schools there were examples of individuals who grew more comfortable expressing their own opinions provided that their ideas were not taken to be representative of the community as a whole. This approach is indeed a key principle of SR.

There are also different approaches to the inclusion of extra-scriptural commentary in SR. One approach is to focus narrowly on the text in question. Whilst participants may access their “internal library” – their prior knowledge of commentary or traditional interpretation relating to the text in question – they are not encouraged to either prepare the texts in advance or to bring commentary material into the SR meeting. An alternative approach includes the commentary material as part of the discussion and it may even be provided as part of the text packet. These different approaches were a frequent topic of discussion for students, some of whom would have preferred to make more use of commentary and other broader contextual material. This was a particular concern for those returning to conservative communities – including some experiencing significant inter- and intra-faith unrest – which would insist on the inclusion of such commentary in any dialogue.

SR is clearly a major focus, strength and attraction of the CIP Summer School and many of the participants expressed great appreciation for the practice. However, one of the main recommendations of the report is that CIP develop a diversity of approaches to SR that can equip the participants to be facilitators in a variety of contexts within and without the academy, amongst the grassroots and particularly within more conservative communities.

Early fruit

In trying to assess the programme one recurring theme was the image of fruit bearing. Several of the staff talked about the programme in terms of planting seeds that take many years to grow into a great tree. There are no shortcuts. At present it may seem that the seeds are floating in the air but as these students, teachers and young religious professionals build careers and become rooted in their communities around the world so the seeds will begin to bear fruit. Notwithstanding this long term view, one of the positive findings of the report is that the programme is already beginning to bear such fruit. For instance:

In 2013 a Christian pastor returned to his troubled country in Africa inspired by entering a mosque for the first time during the Summer School visit to Birmingham. He was determined to visit his local mosque and make contact with the imam there. Within days of his return, much to the concern of his local church congregation, he had made the visit. Despite encountering prejudice and fear he is now planning to meet a leading Islamic scholar in his country.

In 2012 a Jewish teacher was planning her Religious Education class and used the alumni Facebook group to call on her Summer School colleagues for help. A Christian and a Muslim quickly agreed to take part in a lesson and shortly afterwards both appeared in her London classroom – via Skype – much to the interest of the school children who had plenty of questions for them.

Months after leaving the 2012 Summer School a Muslim teacher was reflecting on the difficult conversations she has had with some in her community who hold negative views of other faiths. However, she no longer talks theoretically. She feels she can authoritatively defend her newfound friends and explain their beliefs to others. After all, she says: “I have experience!”

Coupled with the testimonials at the beginning of this report, these are just a few of the stories bearing witness to the building impact of the Summer School. Whilst it is still in its infancy, it is clear that the programme has the potential to powerfully impact individuals and communities around the world in simple yet remarkable ways.

Increased understanding and reduced fear

Although the aim of SR is not to build a definitive understanding of the other faiths, and indeed prior knowledge of the other faiths was expected, over 90% of participants reported learning new things about the other faiths. Typical comments were:

I think I've got a much better appreciation for the diversity within Islam.

I feel I have better insight into the ways of thinking of my Christian and Jewish sisters and brothers.

This in turn helped to break down stereotypes and reduce fear with 56% of participants saying that their attitudes to other faiths had changed. Those who did not report such a change explained that they had already previously had a good attitude. One Omani man recalled:

When I came here what benefitted me is to know them (Jews) personally, to speak with them, to know what they are thinking. After just only 2-3 days you see that it is not as I knew them through the media. We are hearing so many things some of our scholars are speaking ... bad words concerning them. But when you see you can know that they are people as others.

A Christian woman from a country where there is inter-religious violence also felt less frightened of Muslims:

The experiences of living with those Muslims especially from Oman, with their beards. I used to have a kind of fear, and so I think now when I see them walking around I don't think about being threatened the way I used to be.

Strengthened religious identity

Despite this breaking down of fear and increasing understanding, the report shows that in general the process of encountering the other strengthens rather than weakens a person's sense of religious identity. Coming together on the basis of difference does not lead to a watering down of faith to some lowest common denominator. Rather people go away with an enhanced sense of their own religious tradition. In 3 years only one person indicated that her identity had become weaker and she by her own admission had gone into the programme uncertain of her faith.

This was also reflected in questions about exclusive truth and proselytism which showed little change before and after the event. The Jews remained committed to non-exclusivity; the Muslims were, if anything, more decided about the exclusive truth of Islam after the event; and the Christians had mixed views on the subject – before and after. However, whilst Muslims were slightly less inclined to engage in *da'wa* after the event and Jews were consistently opposed to the idea, the number of Christians wishing to see others follow the Christian faith – contrary to what may be expected – rose slightly as two participants changed their minds after the School. In short, the Summer School does not seem to shake people's faith. It may cause them to ask questions or change their approach to the other but it does not weaken their own faith commitment.

Practical outcomes

To date such changes in attitudes and perceptions have not resulted in a large number of practical initiatives. Only 8 graduates (31% of respondents) of the 2011 and 2012 Schools reported having been involved in SR since leaving Cambridge and 13 (50%) have organised some sort of inter-faith activity. However, if there appears to be relatively little immediate fruit then this is often because of the participants' life situations. They are on the whole students, trainee religious professionals or at

an early stage in their careers starting a new job, all of which leaves little time for initiating new projects.

The exceptions to this pattern are the 28 graduates from Oman many of whom already hold significant positions of influence within the Omani Ministry for Endowments and Religious Affairs. In this instance it is altogether possible that the impact will be evident in the near future as new programmes are put in place. Indeed the pattern of having a small group of participants from one location seems to be a successful model, despite the significant challenges it poses to group dynamics. If managed well, it could be replicated in other places hence increasing the impact of the programme in specific locations as the graduates cooperate together to implement change.

Many of the other participants do, of course, have dreams for the future. For example a Muslim hopes to bring senior Islamic scholars from Asia to Cambridge; a rabbinical student dreams of initiating inter-faith dialogue based in a synagogue in Israel; a Muslim plans to seek government permission to start SR in her country; and a Christian hopes to take student groups from America to visit Oman. If at this stage many of these ideas remain aspirations, there is no reason to doubt that some at least will become reality in the future.

Reporting

Of course the experience does not remain with the graduates alone. They are passing it on to others as they talk about their time in Cambridge. Several of the 2013 cohort mentioned that they had heard about the School from the 2012 graduates some of whom had heard about it from the 2011 cohort. 14 of the 2011 and 2012 graduates (56% of respondents) said that they had been able to speak publicly to their church, mosque or synagogue about their experience, although none had spoken to the media and only 6 had written reports. Many more reported talking to family, friends, colleagues and neighbours. In fact a low estimate from numbers given would be that 500 people heard about the Summer School in a personal conversation with a graduate. The high estimate would be at least 1000 suggesting that each participant passes the experience on to between 16 and 33 others in their context.

Enduring relationships

In addition to the above outcomes the two most significant outcomes of the Schools are the ongoing relationships that graduates maintain and the memories that are created of one another.

In the surveys 96% of respondents said that they had made friends with people of other religions and only one person was unsure if this had been the case. Interestingly females tended to feel more strongly than males that they had made friends perhaps showing that women tend to bond more quickly than men. 6 to 18 months after the School 100% of the females reporting were still in contact with one another compared to 77% of the males. It should be noted that the language barrier might well play a role in this statistic as the Arabic-speaking Omanis are disproportionately men.

However, after the same period, although 78% reported that they were still actively pursuing friendships with other participants, only 62% felt that the reverse was true and others were still pursuing relationship with them. Moreover 7 people felt that they had not made as many friends through the event as they had hoped. So clearly the continuance of relationships formed is not a foregone conclusion.

The evidence of the Facebook groups created also suggests that the relationships formed are likely to diminish over time. An initial surge of activity immediately following the School quickly dissipates. In the 2012 Facebook group 61% of activity over the ensuing 15 months was generated by just 5 graduates (See Fig.4 in Appendix).

On the whole these replies suggest that many friendships were formed but it is too early to say how long such relationships will persist. Many of the students along with the staff have expressed a hope that these relationships will continue and that together they will become a cohort of leaders who maintain contact and call on one another as a point of reference and encouragement. For instance one woman reported some months after the event:

The biggest thing for me has been the people that I met and I do stay in touch with some of them, and already there's been some questions that I've had that I've fielded to a few people that I know. It's also just nice to know going forward in the future that there's this network of people that if I have a question or I want help on something, there are people I can turn to and we already have a connection and a history and that kind of relationship where sharing is a comfortable thing to do.

However, some also express honest doubts about their ability to sustain such relationships. As one participant put it:

I really enjoy the relationships. My main difficulty is that relationships across distance are really difficult. I've done a lot of it all my life and I feel that there has to be a high level of commitment of everyone involved.

Memories

Whilst relationships may or may not endure, and people may or may not fulfil their dreams, the one thing that will almost certainly endure is the memory of being together with the other. Reading in books and learning in classrooms just cannot replace the lived experience of spending 3 weeks together with people of other faiths. As one Omani explained:

I do not think I could remember all what I have learn (sic) from there if I was reading that, but I do remember now because it was live and happening in front of me.

Another Muslim said 6 months after the School:

I have a lot of good memories from Cambridge. The best one is good friends and making good relationships between other religions.

It was the same for the other faith communities. Two Jewish participants spoke of the importance of these memories for them:

(The School) provided me with moments and experiences I will always carry with me and I hope I will continue to figure out how to translate these experiences into words, thoughts and more actions in the future and as I continue to learn and grow.

If you say 'Muslim' (now) the first thing that comes into my mind are the Muslims that I met at Cambridge, just because I knew very few (before).

In similar vein an African Christian reflected:

Right now I think my memories are mostly about the Jews because I saw the Jews for the first time there. So those things kept on coming back to me and as I read the Scriptures especially the books of the Old Testament, I read and quietly connect with what I saw people doing in reality.

And another Christian wrote:

We will leave here with faces, stories, echoes of laughter, tales of struggle that automatically humanize and make complex the conflicts we face on a daily basis. These, my new brothers and sisters, through clear devotion to God's will, sincere questions, personal stories and joyous laughter, have etched themselves into my heart; their joy is my joy, and their sorrow is mine as well.

Each graduate carries with them positive memories of the other – the first conversation with a Jew, a meal shared with a Christian, a walk taken with a Muslim – that transcend media images and moribund stereotypes. These memories will stay with them, shaping attitudes, informing decisions and guiding careers. There is no way to measure or put a value on such powerful images.

Challenges for the future

This report concludes that the first 3 years of the CIP Summer Schools programme have been a success and are beginning to show signs of significant potential for impact in the places from which the students have been drawn. The full realization of this impact is likely to take several years not least due to the fact that the participants are mainly, although not entirely, young religious leaders either still in training or in an early stage of their careers. Immediately after leaving the School they are frequently busy studying, travelling or settling into new jobs. Such busyness does not allow time for them to develop their plans and ideas for inter-faith work inspired by the programme. The challenge will be whether, after they have finished their studies, they can be encouraged to continue to pursue those plans once they settle into jobs and careers in new contexts.

Following up this potential must be a priority for the CIP team in the next few years. To date adequate resources and processes have not been in place to ensure that graduates of the School receive ongoing support and encouragement from CIP and the alumni community. This has been recognized by the team and steps are being taken that should result in improvements to the post-School follow-up and the implementation of ideas for continued sustainable interaction between all alumni.

A second challenge is diversification and adaptation. CIP and the “Cambridge brand” inevitably attract those in education and people of an academic disposition. However, as the profile of participants at the School becomes more diverse and more global in character, the contexts to which the graduates return will become increasingly diverse, non-western and, in many cases, non-academic. Some of those contexts include communities that are even in direct opposition to western academic approaches. The students at the School have clearly recognized this problem and consistently said that SR must be adapted if it is to be useful in their home environments. This adaptation will undoubtedly vary from context to context. However, if this evolution of SR is to take place, it will be a challenge for which the School must better equip its students. It will need to develop more diverse models, expose the students to more varied contexts and engage with a wider range of SR facilitators and practitioners. In short, if CIP is to develop a more globally applicable programme it will need to diversify SR out of the academy and into grassroots communities – as it is doing in other contexts – whilst maintaining the principles of difference and respect on which the practice is founded.

This type of development is already happening. SR in the UK, as one example, is currently being adapted for schools, youth groups, hospitals and prisons. CIP will need to draw more on these types of examples. This will entail reviewing the different approaches to both topic and extra-scriptural material in SR.

If graduates are to engage more traditional, conservative communities in some form of SR then they will almost certainly have to discover a way for more commentary and contextual material to be included. This will particularly be the case with certain Muslim communities, and to a lesser extent some Jewish and Christian communities, in which such texts are heavily relied on whilst individual interpretation and freedom of thought are discouraged. These may well be the communities that most need to be engaged in this type of inter-faith conversation. They will not take part in a common ground dialogue but they may be open to an encounter based on difference and focused on the scriptures which they hold in such high regard.

In some cases this encounter will initially need to be an intra-faith encounter. In many troubled regions of the world the problems are sectarian rather than inter-religious. Even where there are minorities of other faiths the socio-political situation may be too sensitive or volatile to permit the faiths to sit at the same table. This would especially be the case where the only believers of other faiths may be converts. In these cases intra-faith reasoning should be considered. This is not something for which the CIP Summer School currently equips its students, although some graduates already report organising such intra-faith SR sessions. This is an area that could well be developed although the same challenges of extra-scriptural material will remain and may be even more acute.

The possibilities of the above applications and the expansion of the CIP Summer School may in the future require changes in the location and organization of the Schools. Clearly holding multiple Schools in different locations around the world could be cost effective, socio-politically relevant and environmentally more sustainable. However, it should be noted that the participants were unanimous in noting the advantages of an *international* as opposed to a *local* encounter. The many benefits and the international, cosmopolitan nature of the School should not be sacrificed for more local events which do not take the participants out of their home environments. A local engagement not only offers a narrower cultural and inter-religious experience but also increases the risks of engagement with the religious other for individuals in tense political situations. Any geographical diversification needs to remain truly *inter-national*.

Such possibilities and potential are a testimony to the success of the first 3 years of the programme due to the hard work and vision of the CIP leadership and staff. Their efforts are to be commended and it is to be hoped that the Summer Schools programme will continue to develop and to bear fruit from the seeds sown around the world for many years.

Appendix

Fig. 1 – Geographical distribution

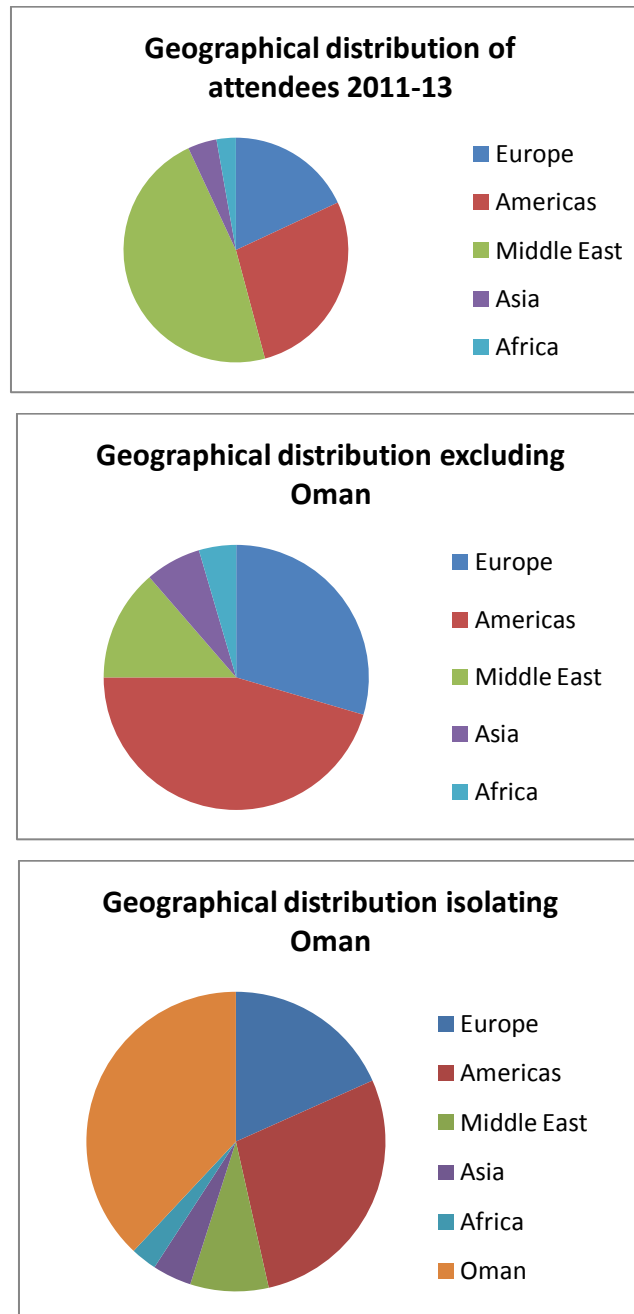


Fig.2 Age of participants

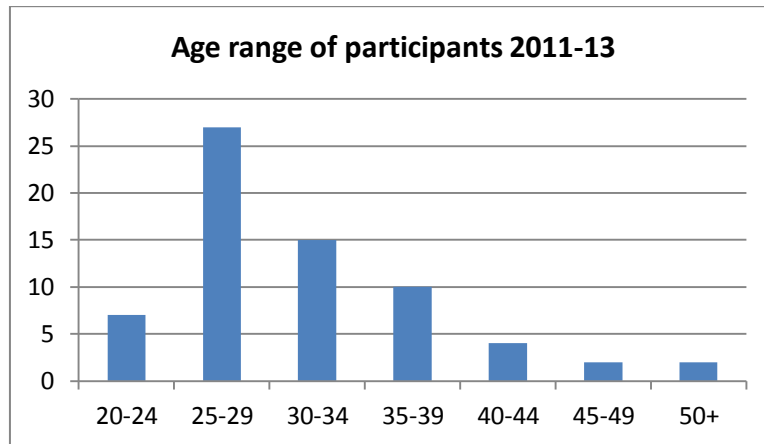


Fig.3 Number of participants by community

	Jewish	Christian	Non-Omani Muslim	Omani Muslim	Other ⁵	Total
Total	15	14	15	28	1	73
Male	8	6	9	26	0	49
Female	7	8	6	2	1	24
Mean age	30.3	32.9	28.0	32.3	25	31.0
Youngest	21	23	21	25	-	21
Oldest	56	45	37	51	-	56

⁵ This participant chose not to identify with any faith group

Fig.4 2012 Facebook group (July 2012-Sept 2013)

