



Members at Gather +962 Conference
Photos courtesy of Seeds of Peace

PEACE & DIALOGUE

by Mostafa Ismail

What better place to bring peace workers from around the world together than the lowest point on earth – 429 meters below sea level – at the Movenpick resort by the Dead Sea in Jordan. A social entrepreneurship and idea generating conference - Gather +962 brings like-minded individuals from around the world together who dedicate their lives to build a peaceful, more harmonious world.

Gather+962 is an initiative of the non-profit international NGO Seeds of Peace, which is best known for its summer camp that brings youth from conflict areas all around the world to engage in facilitated dialogue and camp activities. Seeds of Peace has been organizing camps for 22 years to help youth discover a new way of life, but Gather+962 takes the concept to a different level.

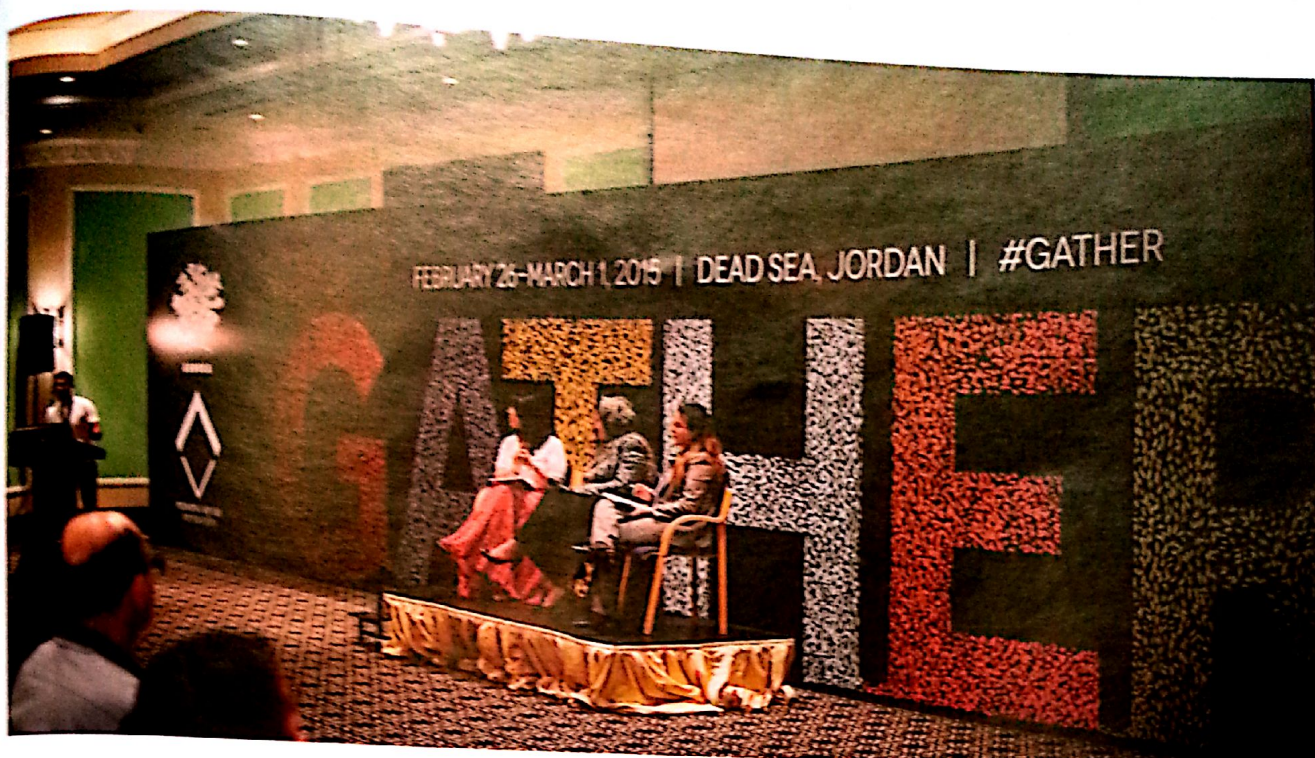
Gather was a means for alumni of Seeds of Peace to broaden their community by opening their doors to people who work in business, technology and media, and explore together how they can contribute to social change. It gathered 212 individuals who utilize business, technology, gender and media as creative resources to aid in the peaceful developmental movement. This network of people aims to be a powerhouse of change-leaders that can create a bigger community of perception shifters, idea challengers and startups, that will exhibit effective transformational impact on their societies.

With support from the Royal Court of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, Gather successfully took place during the last weekend of February with attendees from more than 20 countries worldwide, including Egypt, Jordan, USA, UK, Canada, Pakistan, India, Afghanistan, Kosovo, Palestine (Gaza and The West Bank), and Israel. The three-day conference was designed to be a mix of inspiring talks, discussions, workshops and networking.

Over the course of the three days, participants discussed several topics that would have enormous impact on these sectors for the future of the Middle East and surrounding regions in relation to making the peace process more effective and efficient.

Seeds of Peace believes that empowering the younger generations with the tools needed to achieve sustainable peace lies in





effectively utilizing their networks and creating a space for learning and socializing to shed light on the various kinds of work that create models for constructing sustainable peace. The opportunities created at Gather provide more opportunities for such action to take place.

What differentiated Gather was its diverse subjects, which were mixed to create a schedule that covered issues like gender and conflict, the future of energy in the Middle East, technology in the Middle East and its effects on the peace process, how can economists help aid peace building, and the power of the media in working towards sustainable peace.



One of my favorite speakers at Gather was English performer, author, director and public speaker David Pearl. Pearl led a story-telling workshop which tackled how harnessing the means to tell a good story can portray the intended message with clarity and conviction. He discussed story-telling not just as the telling of stories, but how also we effectively relay any message, be it a business pitch, a novel in the making, a journalism piece or simply a talk between a bunch of friends.

Other significant talks were given by Fawzia Koofi, an Afghan Parliamentarian and Women's Rights Activist, and Parnian Nazry, an alumnus of Seeds of Peace who is currently the advocacy manager at "Women for Afghan Women." Given the current status of women in Afghanistan, it was very inspiring to see two of the leading advocates for women's right speak about how their work is promising to raise the bar and give women their equal rights to participate in any governmental, educational or private sector endeavors.



Gather+962 did not only succeed in connecting people from all over the world and providing them the space for collaboration and cooperative work; it also ventured beyond, showing that the peace process is as powerful as it ever was. The amount of work and effort put into creating the space for social change and peace building to flourish is evident in the participants' work and networks. ▣

To connect with the Gather+962 community and stay up-to-date with Gather-related news, visit: Gather.seedsofpeace.org