

Summary of AVP in the Middle East Topic Session  
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40 participants attended the AVP in the Middle East Topic Session. We conducted the session in the AVP style with Welcome and introductions of facilitators, agenda preview, gathering, light and lively, narrative of the AVP development in Palestine and Israel, including photos of the AVP work in both areas, addressed questions, and closed with an abbreviated version of the affirmation pyramid because of the time constraint.

The team made a point of stating up-front, that the success of the AVP development in the Middle East thus far results from remaining non-partisan re the conflict, military occupation of the West Bank and restriction of entry and exit from the Gaza Strip. The team stressed that keeping the focus on nonviolence and personal growth through participation in AVP workshops has been key.

Having facilitators from Palestine and Israel was a symbolic statement of how we can find common ground despite our differences in the perceptions and experiences of the complex conflict in Palestine and Israel.

Questions included, the status of having both Israeli and Palestinian facilitators co-facilitating workshops and whether or not both Palestinians and Israelis were in workshops together. There is only one organization in the West Bank where work has begun in having joint facilitator teams and participant groups to date.

It was pointed out that Matzmichim, the Israeli organization which is represented by Sharon and Irit, incorporate AVP content and process in their work with Israeli Jewish and Arab children in the schools in Israel. There is at least one Arab AVP-trained staff member of the organization that works in the schools. The AVP Palestine NGO has plans to expand the joint work, but, this needs to be done carefully.

The participants seemed to appreciate the difficulty of working in Palestine and Israel and found the photos informative as to the breath of the work that has been done since 2007. After the completion of the session, some individuals approached the team, thanked them and expressed interest in becoming involved with the AVP work in Palestine and Israel.

Highlighted, was the announcement that the AVP Palestine NGO was established in August 2017. The participants were informed that “all the pieces were in place” for sustainability of AVP and that the AVP Palestine NGO is the lynchpin in the plan going forward.