



Salam Institute for Peace and Justice

Introduction

Salam Institute is a non-profit organization that champions training in conflict resolution, non-violence, civic education and social cohesion. Founded by Dr. Mohammed Abu-Nimer, a leading scholar and peacebuilder, Salam works with diverse communities on capacity building, designing interventions (conflict resolution, nonviolence, civic education), and interfaith dialogue.

Salam's mission is rooted in the values of inclusivity, justice, non-violence, community empowerment, and equality. These guiding principles help shape programs that empower youth, leaders, and communities to engage in peaceful, transformative social change.

Salam's work is structured around the following core pillars:

1. Peacebuilding Training
2. Inter-Religious and Intra-Religious Dialogue
3. Development and Relief
4. Education and Curricular Development
5. Forgiveness and reconciliation
6. Research and Evaluation

Salam Institute's training programs equip youth with conflict-resolution skills, dialogue competencies, and a value-based understanding of peace through a focus on forgiveness and reconciliation skills. This is particularly vital in pluralistic societies, where cultural and religious misunderstandings can exacerbate division. By grounding its work in dialogue, civic education, and engagement, Salam fosters trust and solidarity within communities while promoting inclusive and responsible citizenship.

Salam's Approach

Salam invests in three peacebuilding tracks, which refer to a complementary system that connects different levels of influence and action. Track I represent formal actors such as governments and international institutions, where official agreements and policies are shaped. Track II operates at the informal level, bringing together academics, think tanks, and experts who help bridge the gap between decision-makers and society. Track III focuses on grassroots actors, including civil society organizations and educational institutions, that engage directly with communities to build trust, address local needs, and strengthen social cohesion.

Working across these three tracks is essential because sustainable peace cannot be achieved through top-down approaches alone. This is where Salam Institute's role becomes particularly important. By actively engaging in Track III while also incorporating research and knowledge production aligned with Track II, Salam connects community realities with broader policy and intellectual spaces. This positioning allows it to amplify local voices, ensure that peacebuilding efforts are grounded in real needs, and contribute to more inclusive and effective solutions.



Salam Institute's work on forgiveness and reconciliation operates as an integrated, multi-track peacebuilding model that connects inner transformation with societal and educational policy change.

At its core, Salam's interventions are deeply rooted in Track III, where we work directly with communities, educators, youth, and civil society actors. Through tools such as the REACH Forgiveness workbook adapted to the Arab region, and the Pathways to Forgiveness Guides, Salam facilitates personal inner healing and emotional resilience while strengthening individual and interpersonal trust. This grassroots engagement is essential in conflict-affected contexts, where trauma, grievances, and social fragmentation undermine long-term peace. By equipping individuals with practical forgiveness skills, Salam addresses the human dimension of conflict that is often overlooked in formal peace processes.

At the same time, our work contributes to Track II through research, knowledge production, and capacity building. The REACH Study generates evidence on how forgiveness is understood and practiced across the Arab region, positioning Salam as a thought leader in the field of forgiveness-based peacebuilding. Its training programs for practitioners, educators, and experts further extend this influence by shaping how forgiveness and reconciliation are conceptualized and implemented. Additionally, the Network connects experts and organizations, facilitates knowledge exchange, and contributes to regional dialogue on peacebuilding approaches.

Salam's model has growing relevance to Track I, particularly in informing policy and institutional frameworks. By producing evidence-based, culturally grounded insights, Salam is well-positioned to influence national education systems, transitional justice processes, and reconciliation policies. Its work on forgiveness education can inform curriculum reform, social cohesion strategies, and post-conflict recovery programs. Through strategic partnerships and advocacy, Salam can ensure that the lessons emerging from communities are translated into policy recommendations that shape more inclusive and sustainable peace processes.

Salam has been advancing forgiveness as a core pillar of peacebuilding since its early work, recognizing a critical gap in research and practice across the Arab region. Its journey began with pioneering studies on forgiveness, generating one of the first bodies of knowledge on how forgiveness is understood and practiced in Arab societies.

Building on this foundation, Salam translated research into action by developing training programs and educational tools that integrated forgiveness within schools and communities. Since 2011, it has led efforts to institutionalize forgiveness education through culturally grounded curricula and teacher training initiatives.

This work is significant because it contributes to breaking cycles of violence and fostering social cohesion and stands as a leading model that integrates research, education, and community engagement, demonstrating that sustainable peace must be rooted not only in agreements and policies, but in the transformation of individuals and relationships.

Salam's forgiveness education stands out for three key strengths:

1. Culturally grounded knowledge: Educational materials rooted in Arab cultural and faith contexts that nurture forgiveness as a life skill across generations.
2. Evidence-based designs: Programs are informed by academic research and field data, ensuring long-term relevance and community impact and engagement.



3. Regional collaboration: Through networks spanning 11 Arab countries, Salam promotes partnerships among organizations and faith leaders to normalize forgiveness and reconciliation.

The REACH Forgiveness Study

The REACH workbook is a structured and evidence-based tool for understanding and practicing forgiveness as both a personal and social process. It is designed to lead the individual through a five-step forgiveness process developed by Worthington (2006). Each letter in REACH represents a step in the process: R = Recall the hurt; E = Empathize with the offender; A = Give an altruistic, undeserved gift of forgiveness; C = Commit to the forgiveness experienced; and H = Hold onto forgiveness even when doubts arise. REACH workbook guides individuals through a self-paced journey toward interpersonal forgiveness. The study goes beyond theory by grounding forgiveness in real-life experiences across the Arab region.

The study's uniqueness lies in its focus on one of the most overlooked dimensions of peacebuilding: inner healing. In contexts marked by conflict, displacement, and trauma, forgiveness becomes a critical pathway not only for individual well-being but also for rebuilding trust and social cohesion. REACH helps transform forgiveness from an abstract moral concept into a practical, learnable skill.

Salam's REACH study systematically gathers data on how adults in the Arab region follow the REACH five steps (and 12 lessons) to understand, experience, and practice forgiveness, generating evidence that informs both policy and programming. The study enables Salam Institute to design culturally relevant, scalable interventions rooted in lived realities.

A key strength of REACH is that it does not stop at research; it translates knowledge into action. Salam Institute is seeking funding to develop a ready-to-use, self-paced forgiveness learning toolkit based on the REACH model, making it accessible to diverse populations, including those with limited access to mental health services. In addition, Salam aims to develop and offer REACH training programs for practitioners, educators, and community leaders on how to apply this toolkit effectively. This ensures that forgiveness can be taught, practiced, and spread within communities.

By combining rigorous research, practical tools, and capacity-building, the REACH Study positions Salam Institute as a leader in embedding forgiveness as a sustainable practice for healing and peacebuilding.

Forgiveness Education Guides

The Pathways to Forgiveness Guides are educational tools developed by the Salam Institute to teach forgiveness as a life skill across different age groups. Designed for young children (4–8) and youth (12–16), we use storytelling, dialogue, and interactive activities to make forgiveness understandable and practical. Rooted in real-life stories from the Arab region, the guides ensure cultural relevance and relatability.

These guides are important because they address a critical gap in education: the lack of structured learning around emotional intelligence, conflict resolution, and empathy. By introducing forgiveness early, they help prevent cycles of violence and promote healthier ways of dealing with harm and disagreement. They position forgiveness not only as a moral value but as a set of learnable skills.



For young children, the guide focuses on skills through stories, songs, and play-based learning that build empathy and self-regulation. For youth, they go deeper into self-awareness, types of forgiveness, and practical exercises that strengthen critical thinking and interpersonal skills. This age-sensitive design ensures developmental appropriateness and long-term impact.

Salam Institute has made [these guides available in both English and Arabic](#), allowing for broader regional and international use. This accessibility supports integration into diverse educational settings, including schools, community programs, and non-formal learning spaces.

Salam has developed and [tested a comprehensive training program](#) for educators on how to effectively use these guides. This ensures that the content is not only available but also delivered with quality and consistency.

Through this combination of culturally grounded curricula, accessible materials, and educator training, the Pathways to Forgiveness Guides serve as a powerful foundation for embedding nonviolence, empathy, and responsible citizenship in future generations.

The Regional Network for Forgiveness and Reconciliation in the Arab World

The network is a pioneering initiative launched by Salam Institute for Peace and Justice in May 2023 to advance peacebuilding across the region. It brings together a diverse group of civil society organizations and independent experts working on reconciliation, forgiveness, and social cohesion.

The network currently includes members from 11 Arab countries: Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Qatar, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, and Yemen. This geographic diversity allows it to reflect a wide range of conflict experiences, cultural contexts, and local peacebuilding approaches.

At its core, the network functions as a [collaborative platform for knowledge exchange, capacity building, and joint action](#). Members share lessons learned, develop common strategies, and support each other's work within their respective communities. This [cross-country collaboration](#) strengthens both local impact and regional coherence.

The network's activities include regular meetings to discuss emerging conflicts and humanitarian challenges, as well as training sessions on key themes such as reconciliation practices, gender-sensitive peacebuilding, and community resilience. It also engages in joint initiatives, policy dialogues, and advocacy efforts addressing pressing regional issues like hate speech and violent conflict.

One of its key strengths lies in [connecting grassroots experiences with regional and international conversations](#), enabling locally grounded solutions to inform broader peacebuilding agendas. It also places strong emphasis on the [inclusion of women and youth](#) as essential actors in reconciliation processes.

The importance of the network stems from its ability to unify fragmented efforts across the Arab region. By creating a shared space for collaboration, it avoids duplication, amplifies impact, and builds a collective vision for sustainable peace.

In a region deeply affected by conflict and division, the network plays a critical role in promoting forgiveness and reconciliation as practical, culturally rooted pathways toward long-term stability and social cohesion.