

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA



PUBLIC DIPLOMACY



PUBLIC DIPLOMACY IN THE MUSLIM WORLD

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Letter from the Editors

This special issue brings together a collection of insights on the powerful influence of public diplomacy in the Muslim world. As the editors, we are pleased to present a compilation of articles that delve into the diverse strategies, challenges, and successes of incorporating public diplomacy within Muslim countries.

Amid prevalent biases and stereotypes, Muslim countries often encounter particularly entrenched perceptions and misunderstandings that are arduous to dispel. Public diplomacy necessitates distinct application in this region due to its unique cultural norms, wherein religion functions as the governing law in certain countries. This edition seeks to examine the innovative endeavors pursued by Muslim countries in the realm of public diplomacy and challenge misconceptions about Islam and these nations.

This issue comprises interviews, scholarly articles, and insights on public diplomacy from students pursuing master's degrees in public diplomacy. Their narratives and analyses offer a comprehensive view of the Muslim world's multifaceted nature of public diplomacy. As you explore this publication, we hope that you will discover inspiration and gain a deeper understanding of public diplomacy's influential capacity. Whether manifested through the arts, education, or media, endeavors to construct bridges and cultivate mutual respect are imperative for a more harmonious and interconnected world.

We would like to thank all the individuals who have contributed to this publication. We extend our gratitude to the contributing authors for their diligent efforts and inspiring contributions and to the interviewees for dedicating their time and insights to these enlightening interviews. Special recognition is due to Dr. Robert Banks and Dr. Nick Cull, our professors in the Master of Public Diplomacy program at USC and our diplomat in residence Matthew Asada, for their invaluable guidance and unwavering support throughout the course of this degree and the production of this edition. Finally, our sincere thanks go to the entire Editorial Board for their invaluable contributions, which have been instrumental in realizing the publication's fruition.



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**PUBLIC
DIPLOMACY IN
PRACTICE**

Citizen Diplomacy in Action: The ICDLA's Role in Strengthening Global Connections with the Muslim World

Nora Alzahid

In the era of digital communication marked by a dearth of personal interaction, entities such as the International Citizen Diplomacy of Los Angeles (ICDLA) assume a pivotal role as conduits, facilitating people-to-people diplomacy. ICDLA delivers extensive programs that unite international leaders and local communities, thereby making significant contributions to the advancement of peace and mutual understanding through professional and cultural exchanges. The organization is dedicated to fostering international comprehension and collaboration between the Angelenos and the global community.

ICDLA's Mission and Impact

Founded in 1980 and based in Los Angeles, California, the International Citizen Diplomacy of Los Angeles (ICDLA) is a private nonprofit organization (NGO) that implements the U.S. State Department Visitor Leadership Program

(IVLP) in Greater Los Angeles. The organization aims to facilitate international cooperation through carefully curated exchanges. These exchanges give foreign visitors insights into various aspects of American society, governance, and culture, allowing them to understand the United States and establish lasting relationships.



Annually, ICDLA organizes professional meetings and cultural excursions for approximately seven hundred leaders from over 100 countries. The organization also aims to provide guests with the opportunity to engage deeply with local communities through home hospitalities and explore the diverse diaspora communities and neighborhoods of Los Angeles, including Chinatown and Little Tokyo, offering an authentic experience of the city's international character. By arranging for their visitors to attend sports matches and organizing sports-focused programs, ICDLA incorporates sports diplomacy, a beloved aspect of American culture. The organization remains steadfast in its dedication to advancing global peace and prosperity through citizen diplomacy.

Key Programs in the Muslim World:

Indonesia: Deactivating Disinformation by Strengthening Media and Information Literacy

In early 2023, the International Citizen Diplomacy of Los Angeles (ICDLA) facilitated the participation of six Indonesian professionals in the "Deactivating Disinformation by Strengthening Media and Information Literacy" project. This initiative sought to address disinformation by enhancing media literacy through interdisciplinary collaboration and effective pedagogical approaches. Participants engaged in workshops and meetings, including specialized sessions at the USC Wallis Annenberg Hall, such as the Critical Media Project (CMP), aimed at fostering critical thinking skills and competencies that are essential for navigating the digital information landscape, promoting critical awareness, and facilitating the analysis of media representations. Additionally, workshops conducted at the Center for Media Literacy (CML) were designed to equip participants with the requisite skills for effectively integrating media literacy into educational curricula when they return to their home country.

The program effectively imparted Indonesian professionals with the essential skills and knowledge required to execute media literacy initiatives within their communities. It successfully mitigated the impact of disinformation and cultivated enduring relationships and a deeper appreciation between American and Muslim communities. The program also enabled participants to understand and explore one of the most successful sectors in US education.



Morocco: Women in STEAM Entrepreneurship

In January 2023, ICDLA cordially welcomed five professionals from Morocco to participate in the "Women in STEAM Entrepreneurship" initiative. The goal of this program was to bolster women's capabilities to start businesses in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEAM).

The program was thoughtfully structured to address key objectives in alignment with the global advocacy for sustainable development and gender equality. Participants received insights into the funding, production, and promotion strategies utilized by technology startups, providing valuable perspectives on the entrepreneurial landscape. Moreover, the program aimed to provide female participants with strategies to enhance the empowerment of women and underrepresented minorities in unconventional sectors, thereby fostering diversity and inclusivity within the STEAM fields.

The participants actively engaged in examining collaborations between governmental entities, private enterprises, and academic institutions with the aim of promoting innovation and entrepreneurship. This involved visiting institutions such as the UCLA Smart Manufacturing Innovation Center, the Los Angeles Cleantech Incubator, and the Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation, where they gained invaluable insights into cutting-edge renewable energy strategies and circular economic practices.

The program inspired Moroccan women to pursue careers in STEAM, providing them with the necessary tools and networks to succeed in their entrepreneurial endeavors. It promoted sustainable economic development and brought together five dynamic participants on a mission to explore and integrate advanced entrepreneurial practices within Morocco.



The Power of Citizen Diplomacy

Citizen diplomacy initiatives, such as those spearheaded by the International Citizen Diplomacy of Los Angeles (ICDLA), are essential in bridging cultural divides and fostering international collaboration. These programs engage directly with foreign professionals and leaders to promote a profound understanding of diverse perspectives while encouraging collaborative solutions to global challenges. Notably, the exchanges organized by ICDLA exemplify how

grassroots diplomacy can effectively address critical issues such as digital literacy, women's empowerment, and innovation in STEAM fields.

The impact of ICDLA's initiatives extends beyond the program duration, as participants return to their home countries armed with new insights, strategies, and connections, enabling them to effect positive changes in their communities. The relationships forged through these exchanges contribute to a network of global citizens devoted to promoting mutual understanding and cooperation.

ICDLA continually showcases the transformative power of citizen diplomacy through its impactful programs, such as in Indonesia and Morocco, which are prime examples of how local actions can wield significant global influence, paving the way for a more informed, empathetic, and cooperative global community.

Citizen diplomacy is a powerful instrument within public diplomacy, fostering genuine engagement with local populations and acting as a potent force in challenging misconceptions and promoting understanding. Noteworthy are the significant economic impacts of citizen diplomacy, notably in facilitating international business exchanges and partnerships, thereby promoting trade and investment. Entrepreneurs and professionals who engage in citizen diplomacy can open new markets, creating economic opportunities that drive growth and development.

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