
Frequently Asked Questions: *Iraqi Refugee Solidarity Initiative*

Why does GYC require that participants make a contribution and/or fundraise to help support the program in order to participate?

As a non-profit organization, Global Youth Connect relies on the financial contributions we receive from people and institutions who believe in the goals of our projects. In addition to requesting contributions from participants, GYC and our partner organizations in Jordan will share the burden of fundraising to make this project possible. We are actively fundraising from interested individuals, foundations and institutions to help cover the costs of the program that are not covered by participant contributions and/or participant fundraising efforts.

Similar to many education institutions and organizations, GYC asks U.S. participants to help cover a portion of the costs of their participation in the program. While some participants may be able to make this contribution directly, most participants will rely on the support of others to make their participation possible. We see the fundraising process undertaken by participants as an extension of the project's goals. You will help raise awareness on the Iraqi refugee crisis while also building your skills to raise money. Both these skills – awareness-raising and fundraising – are critical skills for all activists. At the same time, we recognize that participants are able to tap into sources of funding that GYC and our partner organizations cannot (e.g., grants from your school, support from a local foundation, members of your community, etc.)

We do our best to keep our costs low and to use the money received by all our donors wisely and consciously. At the same time, the programs are very time-intensive to organize and manage. We invest a lot of energy into each project and keep the number of participants low to promote a high level and quality of interaction. We also place a high value on being available and supportive to all participants before, during and after the program.

We welcome you to contact us with any questions or concerns you may have regarding the financial aspects of participating in this program.

Are scholarships and/or financial aid available for U.S. participants?

We hope that the costs involved with participation will not prevent anyone who is truly motivated and committed to being a part of the activities of the program from being able to participate. We do have a firm commitment to providing advice and support to each selected participant as they seek ways to raise the needed funds to cover their participation in the trip. It is our experience that participants from all backgrounds are typically able to find sources of funding to help make it possible for them to participate in the program.

We recommend that you check out our fundraising guide. It may provide you with some ideas that you hadn't thought about that might make your participation in the program possible. Furthermore, many U.S. colleges and universities have pools of funds available to assist students interested in educational opportunities abroad and/or may be willing to provide academic credit for your participation in the program. If you are currently a student, you may want to check with your academic advisor or the career services office to see if they have more information about this.

Please review the information in our Fundraising Guide for ideas and tips on how to successfully raise money towards your participation in a GYC program:

www.globalyouthconnect.org/fundraising_guide.pdf

Can I get academic credit for participating in the program?

While GYC is currently unable to directly award academic credit to participants in the program, many past participants have been able to successfully obtain academic credit directly from their college or university. However, please be aware that policies for awarding academic credit vary widely from school to school. Therefore, we recommend that you discuss the possibilities with your academic advisor and/or professors (preferably before applying to the program) to learn more about what is possible and to discuss any additional requirements your school may have to earn academic credit for participation in the program. For example, some schools may require you to write a research paper, make a presentation at your

school, receive a completed evaluation form from the program director, etc.

What is a "Learning Community"?

A "Learning Community" is an experiential educational process. Participants work together to develop common frameworks of understanding, enhance their substantive knowledge of conflict transformation and human rights, strengthen their leadership skills, build supportive peer relationships, and develop collaborative projects to address issues of peace, justice and human rights. The term "Learning Community" comes from the popular education movement and refers to a group of learners who work together to create knowledge through shared dialogue, reflection and action.

What about safety and security?

No matter where you travel, safety is always a concern. The key is to be a smart traveler, be aware of your surroundings and not to take any unnecessary risks. Of course, there are no guarantees but the best thing that participants can do is read as much as they can about the potential hazards and be very cautious about the choices that they make while on the trip.

GYC takes a number of measures to address safety concerns:

- All participants are registered at the U.S. embassy by GYC.
- GYC will purchase comprehensive travel insurance on behalf of all participants in order to protect them in the event of a medical or other emergency while traveling.
- GYC provides all participants with links to information on the current security situation in the country and advises participants to be familiar with the current political and social context through a combination of individual research and required readings.
- We take seriously the participant selection process and select participants that we feel are emotionally and psychologically prepared for the program. The group dynamic also provides an important supportive community.

- Participants are provided with a basic safety briefing during the program orientation as well as a written emergency guide and tips on how to handle certain emergency situations that may arise during the program.
- We seek advice and support on safety concerns from our local partner organizations and a representative of the local partner organization typically participates in most of the program activities.
- Experienced program staff is available throughout the program to facilitate any problems that might arise. The staff participates in all formal program activities and also stays in the same hotel with the group.
- We monitor news related to all of our programs on a daily basis in order to keep updated on current events and how they affect our program activities.
- We reserve the right to change and/or cancel program activities or location of activities at any time in order to address any potential safety concerns.
- We make assessments and take actions as to special safety concerns that we need to address in organizing the logistics and content specific to each program.

We feel that it is very important for all interested applicants to familiarize themselves with potential security, safety and health concerns decide for themselves if they feel comfortable with the risks associated with traveling and participating in the program.

The U.S. State Department regularly prints travel warnings with current information on possible security concerns in every country in the world. To learn more about potential security concerns in Jordan, check out the following link:

http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1149.html

Health issues should be a concern of all travelers to foreign countries, including illness from food and water. Participants should take the time to familiarize themselves with potential health risks and take the necessary precautions. Current health

information for travelers to Jordan can be found on the Center for Disease Control's web site:

<http://www.cdc.gov/travel/destinationJordan.aspx>

What about language issues? Will I have a problem communicating?

What you get out of this program will be a direct reflection of how much you put into it. We expect that all participants will be active and engaged; this includes being willing to pro-actively open lines of communication despite language challenges. In fact, the ability to understand and be understood across cultures is one of the most valuable skills that you will obtain by participating in this program. We will appreciate your patience and understanding as we work through language barriers and communication issues during the program.

All program activities will be conducted in English although, at times, translation may be provided. Jordanian and Iraqi participants will be required to speak English in order to ease communication in this highly interactive program.

I'm under/over the age restrictions but I am really interested, can I still apply?

GYC's mission is specifically focused on building the skills, knowledge and capacity of young people to be human rights advocates. Each program is designed with the needs of a particular group of participants in mind. This program is open to participants between the ages of 18-30. Unfortunately, due to the nature of this program and the fact that we expect a large number of applications, we are unable to consider participants who fall outside of this age range.

If you do not meet the eligibility requirements for this program, we encourage you to get in contact with us as you may fit the selection criteria for future programs. Also, there are many other ways that you can get involved in our work as a volunteer, as a mentor, as an employee, by attending an event hosted by us that is open to the public, by discussing with us ways to collaborate with projects that you are involved in, by making a financial contribution to our work, and by staying informed and activated through the information we

provide on our listserv, our reports, and on our website.

I'm not a U.S. citizen but I am really interested in participating in the program, can I still apply?

This program is designed to work with American citizens alongside of their Jordanian and Iraqi counterparts. Unfortunately, due to the nature of the goals of this program, we are unable to accept applications from non-American citizens even if you are living, working or studying in the U.S.

As a globally-minded organization, we hope to widen the geographic scope for our program participants in the future. Right now, our small size and limited capacity requires us to focus our programs narrowly. Get in touch with us to let us know about your interest in working with us and we'll keep you updated on future opportunities. The more we know that people are interested in our work, the more we can work to meet the needs and build new programs.

I'm from Iraq/Jordan, how can I get involved in the project?

If you are a Jordanian youth living in Jordan or an Iraqi refugee youth living in Jordan, please contact us and we will send you information about how to apply to participate in the program. The application process for Iraqi and Jordanian participants will be coordinated by our partner organization in the coming months.

If you work with an organization or institution in Jordan or any of our project countries, we welcome you to contact us to share with us your programs and mission. We are always looking to for new organizations to collaborate with and we'd be happy to discuss specific ideas with you further.

For More Information

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