

Salam Shabab

Salam Shabab (Magic Carpet, Steel River Production and USIP, Iraq/Jordan) is a reality series for Iraqi youth ages 14 to 18 years old that aims “to create the foundations for peace building by empowering Iraqi youth to be confident, responsible and participatory citizens in their societies”. Set within a competitive-reality format, culturally mixed teams (cf. screenshot 1) are asked to compete in various challenges.

The first challenge the teams participate in is a sports challenge; in this episode, each team must work together to put at least two balls in each of the six buckets under 45 seconds (cf. screenshot 2). The second challenge is a problem-solving challenge; here, teams must build a strong enough tower out of straws and clay (cf. screenshot 3). The final challenge is the short film (cf. screenshot 4) and performance challenge (cf. screenshot 5); here, each team has one week to prepare a film and live performance with the theme “We are different, we are the same” (cf. screenshot 6). After each competition, teams discuss what went wrong and whether there is room for improvement (cf. screenshot 7). The winning team becomes “Salam Shabab – the Peace Ambassador of Iraqi youth” (cf. screenshot 8).

Salam Shabab was one of the PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONALE 2012 finalists in the 12-15 Fiction & Non-Fiction category. Iraq Television was awarded the UNESCO Prize for its production of *Salam Shabab*.

International experts’ opinions

International experts shared their opinions about *Salam Shabab* during the discussion sessions at the PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONALE 2012. Overall, experts were genuinely touched by *Salam Shabab*. Although many acknowledged that it does not have the production value of Western competitive reality shows, many thought *Salam Shabab* was much more powerful than many of those shows.

“I spend most of my time bringing to TV game-shows with lots of electronics and a lot of money. When I see this program, I was so touched and moved by it, because it attempts something extremely difficult – combining fun and entertainment with a cause and a purpose and a message.” (female expert, South Africa)

Many experts thought the show was well-intentioned when considering the current atmosphere in the Middle East.

“It was very wonderful. I think it was very brave of them for forging a kind of unity in a country that has never been united.” (male expert, Pakistan)

“I was quite touched by the program. A country that has had war for such a long time – to make this experiment to put different religious groups into one team was interesting.” (female expert, Germany)

“It’s a good try. If all the youth in the Middle East could think this way, there would be more peace in the world.” (female expert, Taiwan)

A few experts believed that the show’s low production value actually benefited the show by making it look more genuine and sincere.

“Because it was not so professional, it had some true feelings in it.” (female expert, Germany)



Ill. 1: Each team is made up of teenagers from different backgrounds



Ill. 2: Teams compete in a sports-related challenge



Ill. 3: Teams compete in a problem-solving challenge

And the contestants' genuine reactions helped to communicate the show's message more effectively: "You can really see the emotions of the people who are in it. I think that the message was all over their faces: they only want to live in peace." (female expert, Macedonia)

Target Audience 6.66	Idea 6.54	Script 5.46	Realization 5.5
Average Score per Category by experts' voters at PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONAL 2012			

Opinions from teenagers in 7 countries

The PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONAL 2012 included the votes of an international youth jury which was organized in co-operation with broadcasters worldwide. Teens between 12 and 15 in 7 countries discussed and judged 12 programs in the category 12 to 15. Here is the summary of their discussions on the program *Salam Shabab*.



Ill. 4: Teams show off their short films to an audience

In **Australia**, aside from one youth commenting on the nice visual effects, most of the youth jury did not find the show very engaging. "It's not original", said one boy. Another did not think the show effectively showed the value of "teamwork".

In **Cuba**, the response was mostly positive. Aside from one jury member thinking the show was "boring and monotonous", all members drew something positive from it, "the young have to unite", "it rises against racism and regionalism", "by playing games, you can talk about war, peace, and unity of people and religions in a peaceful manner".



Ill. 5: Teams perform their skits in front of a live audience

"Finally, we watch a program from the Middle East", said members of the youth jury in **Egypt**. One thought that the title of the program, *Salam Shabab*, was a strong one, even though he didn't think the program itself was quite as strong. Another also commented on the title: "There is no relationship between the title, which means peace, and the content of the program." The competitions were also described as unsuitable for this age group.

In **Macedonia**, the response was mixed. One female jury member thought that "the sadness of the team who lost was very real", while another thought they did a "good job" overall. One mentioned that it was difficult to relate to the show because "we live in a different condition".



Ill. 6: The kids are taught how to create effective skits and short films

Opinions of the **Nigerian** youth jury were slightly more negative. One thought that *Shalam Shabab* was just "okay" while another thought it was boring but did enjoy the fact that contestants "worked together in order to get each task done". There were more comments made about the contestants: one thought that "they were not really creative" and "didn't put much effort into it", while another disagreed and said, "they displayed it as if it was very easy but if someone here would have tried it, it would be difficult".

Youth jury members from the **Philippines** were concerned with the themes of the shows. One saw the show as a reminder that although difficulties happen, "life goes on". Others thought that the show was encouraging change not only in Iraq but also in their own country. The show was a reminder for them not to be "derelicts of society. We should strive to improve our education.



Ill. 7: Teams discuss what went wrong and what they could have done better

We can also be agents of change in our country. We should promote peace and unity". One thought the show had an "excessive number of dull moments" and did not think, Filipino youth would like this sort of show.

In the USA, the youth jury had mixed opinions. One member liked how the show encouraged them to think about peace and cooperation while another thought it “seemed painfully obvious that they were attempting to make a political statement”. The show was criticized for being too repetitive; in terms of challenges and music. One member thought that their skits were “too short and all the same”, while another didn’t like that the music was the same for every challenge.



III. 8: The red team wins

Ben Kempf (Centennial College, Toronto, Canada)

Youth Jury 2012	Score	Rank
Australia	3.9	11
Cuba	6.4	12
Egypt	2.0	12
Macedonia	4.9	11
Nigeria	3.0	12
Philippines	7.2	10
United States	3.5	11

Winner of PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONALE 2012 UNESCO Prize