

Seminar on "Crossing Boundaries, Where to Go?"

[MSW Students](#) and members from [Ammachi Labs](#) and the [Center for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality](#) were treated to an inspiring talk and interactive session by Dr. Irna van der Molen, Scientific Director at Reliefbase Foundation and policy advisor at the University of Twente, Netherlands. Her talk, "Crossing Boundaries, Where to Go?", focused on career development, innovation, growth and finding one's passion. Dr. van der Molen and other experts from Reliefbase were visiting Amrita in July to collaborate with Ammachi Labs and the Center for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality. Offered by India's only UNESCO Chair in Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, Amrita MSW is a two-year full-time residential program which offers world-class opportunities in the field of Social Work. Amrita has been in a long-standing cooperation with foreign universities, organizations and related institutions. These innovative programs prepare students to become advocates for social equality and social justice.

Career Motivational Seminars can be very helpful and inspiring to students transitioning from academia to the 'real world' of responsibility as an adult. To this end, Ammachi Labs and the Center for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality were very fortunate to be able to bring Dr. Irna van der Molen to Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham's Amritapuri Campus to deliver such an Seminar to our MSW and PhD students. Dr. Irna is the Scientific Director at Reliefbase Foundation. She is also a Policy Advisor at the University of Twente, Netherlands.

Dr. Irna was very congenial, good natured, and engaging as she first walked the group through her own prestigious career, starting just as our students are, not knowing what the path of life would bring to her in terms of applying her academic skills to employment opportunities. She carefully prepared the eager scholars to be realistic about their career path as a step-by-step process. In this manner, Dr. Irna spoke of the steps involved in career development. She encouraged innovation, and even more strongly encouraged the Amrita scholars to pursue paths that ignite their interests, their passions, and their dreams.

Students actively engaged with our esteemed and accomplished guest lecturer. In brief, Dr. Irma covered the following objectives during her seminar:

- Sharing her personal academic and career path
- Student scholars reflect upon their goals and interests (activity)
- Steps to for setting goals and a directed career path
 - o Identify interests
 - o Appraise one's skill set
- Assess career opportunity availability in one's area of interest
- Take active steps to increase one's chances of securing work in one's chose area
 - o Pursue continued study and regularly refreshing of one's knowledge base
- Keep growing! Be open-minded ready for unexpected surprises and alternate pathways that you had not even considered

In terms of the last objective of continued personal and employment growth, Dr. Irma spoke of how her own career path had not been her first area of interest. However, being open-minded in accepting offers from another employment area, she found the experience invigorating and of great interest. This led her to her current position from which she derives much satisfaction and enjoyment.

Amrita's Amritapuri's CWEGE MSW and PhD scholars very much enjoyed and learned from Dr. Irma's Seminar. They expressed much appreciation for her advise, and for her personable manner in sharing practical information with all.

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Participants: 50

Resource Person:

Dr. Irma van der Molen

Policy and Strategy Advisor at the University of Twente, Netherlands & Scientific Director of the Relief base Foundation

MPA-ES Module: Professional Negotiation Skills and Management of Conflicts Irma van der Molen was born in 1969 and holds an MA in Public Administration, an M.Sc. in Risk Management, and a Ph. D. in Water Resource Management from the University of Twente in the Netherlands. As Senior Policy Advisor she supports the Board of the University and Scientific and business Directors on themes related to knowledge transfer, area development and creating economic and societal impact. She is also Scientific Director of the Reliefbase Foundation. Reliefbase Foundation is a Joint Innovation initiative where public and private partners, together with knowledge institutes, community organizations and (international) NGOs, work together to test and validate new concepts, prototype products, instruments, systems and materials for innovations that can be used in the context of disasters and emergency response, relief operations.



Figure 1Dr. Irma during the seminar



Figure 2 Participatory discussions



Figure 3 Staff expressing their learnings during the discussion



Figure 4 Discussion with researchers, staff



Figure 5 MSW students with Dr. Irna