

# What Can I Do That Matters?

The Progressive Empowerment of Women and Youth

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## VENUE

Skills Matter | CodeNode  
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# Building Youth Peace Leadership

How to Inspire a New Generation of Peacemakers

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## **Introduction**

Thanks Charles and IPYG for inviting me to participate as a panel speaker on “What Can I Do That Matters?” I am going to explore how can we make a difference by being a youth peace leader as we need effective and honest people in leadership positions more than ever before. A leader is a person who has the power to shape our future. Who is a global citizen? A global citizen is one who takes responsibilities for his or her actions to make the world a more peaceful and safer place. A leader is the one who knows the way, goes the way and shows the way with absolute passion and integrity. In short, it is in essence ethical leadership standing for what is right and just.

Youth empowerment is a process where children and young people are encouraged to take charge of their lives. They do this by addressing their situation and then take action in order to improve their access to resources and transform their consciousness through their beliefs, values, and attitudes.

## **Obstacles to building peace**

- Poverty – experiences of discrimination and social segregation
- Radicalisation of the youth by flashpoints like ongoing wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Yemen etc. – UK Foreign Policy trigger points like the 7<sup>th</sup> July 2005 Bombing or unjust laws like 1773 Tea Act which led to the Boston Tea Party in America or the self immolation of the Tunisian trader Mohamed Bouazizi – that led to the 2011 Tunisian and Arab Revolution
- Ideologies of the radical groups which feeds violent extremism – Hizb-ut-Tahrir in Uzbekistan. Al-Quida which sought the removal of the US military forces from Saudi Arabia and striking terror into their enemy
- Marginalisation of the youth as they feel disengaged from the mainstream society
- Struggle for social justice for a more equitable and sustainable world

## **Igniting the potential of 1.8 billion**

Dear friends of IPYG, to overcome the above obstacles and to realize the dividend, countries must invest in the empowerment, education and employment of their young people. There are 1.8 billion young people in the world today, representing a staggering amount of human potential. Yet too many of them are trapped in poverty, with few opportunities to learn or to earn a decent living.

“We all appreciate the massive waste of human capital in our world when 74 million young people cannot find work,” said Mr. Ban ki Moon, Former Secretary General of United Nations.

“The more young people grow into well-educated adults with fewer dependants and new opportunities to acquire wealth, savings and purchasing power, the more they will be able to accelerate economic growth and development,” said Sam K. Kutesa, President of the 69th Session of the General Assembly.

### **What is global citizenship?**

It is a way of living that recognises our world is an increasingly complex web of connections and interdependencies. One in which our choices and actions may have repercussions for people and communities locally, nationally or internationally.

Global citizenship nurtures personal respect and respect for others, wherever they live. It encourages individuals to think deeply and critically about what is equitable and just, and what will minimise harm to our planet. Exploring global citizenship themes help learners grow more confident in standing up for their beliefs, and more skilled in evaluating the ethics and impact of their decisions.

### **Who is a global citizen?**

Dear friend of IPYG, a global citizen is someone who:

- is aware of the wider world and has a sense of their own role as a world citizen
- respects and values diversity and has an ethic of care for the world

- has an understanding of how the world works
- is outraged by social injustice
- participates in the community at a range of levels, from the local to the global
- is willing to act to make the world a more equitable and sustainable place
- takes responsibility for their actions.

To be effective Global Citizens, young people need to be flexible, creative and proactive. They need to be able to solve problems, make decisions, think critically, communicate ideas effectively and work well within teams and groups. These skills and attributes are increasingly recognised as being essential to succeed in other areas of 21st century life too, including many workplaces. These skills and qualities cannot be developed without the use of active learning methods through which pupils learn by doing and by collaborating with others.

### **Why is global citizenship education needed?**

Education is a must, as it not only provides transmission of culture but also a provider of alternative views of the world and a strengthens of skills to explore them.

With the interconnected and interdependent nature of our world, the global is not 'out there'; it is part of our everyday lives, as we are linked to others on every continent:

- socially and culturally through the media and telecommunications, and through travel and migration
- economically through trade
- environmentally through sharing one planet
- politically through international relations and systems of regulation.

The opportunities our fast-changing 'globalised' world offers young people are enormous. But so too are the challenges. Young people are entitled to an education that equips them with the knowledge, skills and values they need in order to embrace the opportunities and challenges they encounter, and to create the kind of world that they want to live in. An education that supports their development as Global Citizens.

## **Steps towards a better future**

For a better future for all it is essential to empower women and girls, and ensuring their sexual and reproductive health and human rights. This would enable them to determine when and whom to marry and the number of their children. When women and girls are able to make these decisions, they are better able to complete their educations and pursue jobs.

For the empowerment of women, we should follow resolution 1325 which urges all actors to increase the participation of women and incorporate gender perspectives in all United Nations peace and security efforts. It also calls on all parties to conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, in situations of armed conflict.

Countries must also increase employment opportunities for young people. Many young people will be forced to sit on margins of society, waiting on the train track for a train that may never come, as there is lack of employment options available in many communities.

There is also a critical need to involve young people in decisions that will affect them. We cannot talk about peace and sustainable development without the active involvement of youth. When we give young people decent jobs, political weight, negotiating muscle, and real influence in our world, they will create a better future.

## **Ideas, key issues and actions to become a youth leader**

Dear friends and supporters of IPYG, below are organisational ideas for peace leadership:

- Youth around the world actively involved in organisations, social movements, civic initiatives and activities for peacebuilding, social justice, human rights and working to address conflict issues and dynamics in our communities, countries and internationally;
- Youth, organisations and movements working to address and overcome violent extremism both in communities and from states and governments;

- Youth, organisations and movements who want to deepen real, practical skills in peacebuilding and working with conflict;
- Youth, organisations and movements working to transform and overcome militarism and war or violent conflict in our communities and internationally

Key issues and leadership campaigning ideas:

- Building a global solidarity movement and campaigns in our countries with the people of Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Yemen to overcome and end the wars in those countries;
- Building a solidarity movement with the people of Ukraine to help support efforts to end the war and division in Ukraine;
- Linking together practitioners, activists, organisations and movements working to bring about a fundamental shift in how the world deals with conflicts, replacing war, violence and the global weapons industry with practical and effective means of handling conflicts;
- Inner peace, resilience, leadership and cultivating peace within to empower, strengthen and support our engagement in often difficult and challenging contexts;
- Introducing peace education into our schools, universities and societies

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion let me say what we need, is an outline of practical steps to understand that all human and planetary life is sacred. We need the historic transition from the reason of force to the force of reason to trigger the changes urgently needed. Let us invent the future where every human being has the courage and dedication to build global peace and commit ourselves to make our world a better place. We must visualise every day in our minds that there is no challenge which is beyond our unique capacity as human beings. The future belongs to optimists who can grab the opportunities that exist and help to build a world of hope, joy, tolerance and solidarity. Thanks for listening.

## Inspiring Quotations for Peace Leadership

1. Not in one man, or in one generation, can anything great be accomplished... Mankind, and life in general, is a succession of generations in which it is enough to nurture a spark from hand to hand, always in the hope that the flame will catch at last  
**Isaac Asimov**
2. The person who says it cannot be done should not interrupt the person who is doing it  
**Chinese Proverb**
3. Maturity is when you stop complaining and making excuses, and start making changes  
**Roy T Bennet**
4. To lose patience is to lose the battle  
**Mahatma Gandhi**
5. Don't chase people. Be yourself, do your own thing and work hard. The right people – the ones who really belong in your life will come to you. And stay.  
**Will Smith**
6. The evils of government are directly proportional to the tolerance of the people  
**Frank Kent**
7. Freedom had been hunted around the globe, reason was considered as rebellion; and the slavery of fear had made men afraid to think. But such is the irresistible nature of truth, that all it asks, and all it wants, is the liberty of appearing.  
**Thomas Paine**
8. It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men  
**Frederick Douglass**
9. The most dangerous phrase in the language is "we've always done it this way"  
**Grace Hopper**
10. Vision without execution is hallucination  
**Thomas Edison**
11. Ask yourself what is really important. Have the wisdom and the courage to build your life around your answer.  
**Lee Jampolsky**

12. Good leaders develop ideas. Great leaders develop people. The best leaders develop new leaders

***Bobby Umar***

13. The strongest people are not those who always win, but those who do not give up when they lose.

***@InspiringThinkin***

14. Honesty is a very expensive gift, don't expect it from cheap people.

***Warren Buffet***

15. When you learn, teach. When you get, give.

***Maya Angelou***

16. I walk slowly, but I never walk backward.

***Abraham Lincoln***

17. It always seems impossible until it's done.

***Nelson Mandela***

18. A smooth sea never made a skilled sailor.

***English Proverb***

19. Be someone who makes someone else look forward to tomorrow

***Anonymous***

20. No man will make a great leader who wants to do it all himself, or to get all the credit for doing it.

***Andrew Carnegie***

21. Fire is the test of gold, adversity of strong man/leaders

***Seneca***



The lecture can be downloaded from the Uniting for Peace website [www.unitingforpeace.com](http://www.unitingforpeace.com). The materials and excerpts have been taken from the following sources:

1. Vijay Mehta's new book *Peace Beyond Borders: How the EU brought peace to Europe and how exporting it would end conflicts around the world* is published in 2016 in print and ebook (both £9.99) by New Internationalist, with a foreword written by Jose Ramos-Horta, Nobel Peace Laureate and former president of Timor-Leste. The book can be purchased online from [www.europeforpeace.org.uk](http://www.europeforpeace.org.uk) or from Amazon, Kobo, ePub, Apple iBooks and others
2. Vijay Mehta, *The Economics of Killing*, Pluto Press, London 2012
3. Vijay Mehta, *Is Peace Possible*, University of Southampton speech, 2016
4. Matthew Francis, *What Causes Radicalisation*, January 2012

### VIJAY MEHTA – BIO

**Vijay Mehta** is an author and peace activist. He is Chair of Uniting for Peace and founding Trustee of Fortune Forum Charity. His books include *United Nations and its Future in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (2005), *Arms No More* (2005), *The Fortune Forum Code: For a Sustainable Future* (2006), *"The Economics of Killing"* (2012) and *"Peace Beyond Borders"* (2016).

The Sunday Times described him as a "longstanding activist for peace, development, human rights and the environment, who along with his daughter Renu Mehta has set a precedent for striving to change the world" (**The Sunday Times, February 01, 2009**).

In 2014, Vijay Mehta's bio "**The Audacity of Dreams**" appeared in the book form "**Karma Kurry**" published by Jaico Publishing House, India with a foreword to the book by Nelson Mandela.

"Thank you for all you do Vijay – both the organisation Uniting for Peace and yourself are inspiration and give us all hope that both yourself and the organisation can bring a world without a war. Indeed it is possible, even in our own time." – **Mairead Corrigan Maguire, Nobel Peace Laureate 1976**

"This book, *Peace Beyond Borders* by Vijay Mehta, an astute non-European observer, uses this unprecedented, extraordinary experience as the centrepiece of a carefully crafted theory on the construction and maintenance of peace and prosperity on a global scale. It is my hope that many non-Europeans will use it as a source of inspiration as they attempt to carve out long-lasting peace in other parts of the world."

- **Jose Ramos-Horta, Nobel Peace Laureate 1996 and Former President of Timor-Leste**