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PEACE PROSPECTS

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PEACE EDUCATION



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LETTER

from the EDITORS

In a global climate of extreme turbulence, peace education is a practice of hope and innovation. In the face of profound adversity, oppression, silencing, and war, peace education is a practice of resistance, of courage, of imagination, of perseverance, of interconnection, and of transformation. In this issue of *Peace Prospects*, we explore what it means to educate for peace and to collectively meet this moment, at a global scale. We define peace education in a broad sense, encompassing both formal and informal learning programs, and focusing on learners of

all ages—adults, youth, and children. We highlight the work of leaders, organizations, and scholars who are spearheading educational initiatives specifically focused on peace leadership.

Across this issue, we illustrate the diversity of peace education efforts unfolding around the world—from formal school programs like Peacemakers in the UK, to locally rooted initiatives such as PEPNET in Nigeria and HIVE in Pakistan, to global systems-based approaches like those of World BEYOND War.

We also feature faith-based models, such as those led by the Salam Institute, and philanthropic investments like those of Education Above All.

We learn from powerful and innovative examples of practice: Roba, a peace leader and educator in the British International School of Gaza, is creating space for courageous dialogue and connection among students. HIVE is co-creating context-specific models of peace education with communities in Pakistan. The Education Above All Foundation is advancing global initiatives focused on safeguarding education, promoting peace, and empowering youth. Meanwhile, PeacEd Gateway is creating a global movement focused on transforming education and promoting cultures of peace.

We also hear directly from global peace leaders and educators—including Roba in Egypt, Phill in the UK, Ali in Pakistan, Gal in Israel, Julie in the U.S., and Moses in Nigeria—who share what motivates them, how they define and understand peace leadership and education, and their visions for a more peaceful and just world. And finally, a group of young women artists in Afghanistan offer a poignant window into their lives through visual art and storytelling, reminding us why education and peace matter—and why education must be protected and expanded for all.

Peace Prospects serves as a space to creatively bridge peace leadership research and practice around the world. In this issue, we hope this pedagogical blending increases your understanding of the importance of and opportunities for peace education in this moment, supports your learning about transformative approaches to peace education happening right now, sparks inspiration for innovative ways to engage in peace education in your own life, and provides insight toward how to invest in peace education and continue your own learning journey.

In Peace,

Lisa Hitt, Sylvia Murray,

& Hannah Rhoades



The Lady of Words

Written by Sadaf Safi



Anonymous Afghan artist

IN THE LAND OF SILENCE

It was a winter morning in 2021. The weather was cold, but our hearts were warm. We were in the middle of our school exams. My sister and I, with our neatly ironed uniforms, put our notebooks into our bags and walked toward school with excitement and enthusiasm. Our school was not far from our home, and every day we used to go there with happy hearts and clear minds.

On the way, I talked with my sister and we discussed our exams. Slowly, we got closer and closer to the school gate. When we wanted to open the gate, the school official said, “The school is closed, and you are not allowed to enter.”

My hands were shaking. My sister and I looked at each other. It was a strange feeling. We just stayed silent, with tears shining in our eyes.

“If everything around you seems dark, look again, you may be the light.”

I asked the school official, “Why can’t we enter the school?”

He said, “It has been ordered by the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan that girls are not allowed to enter school.”

That day was when the girls of Afghanistan went back many years—about 30 years earlier, when the Taliban first came to Afghanistan. After they were gone, the country had made a lot of progress, but with their return, we went back many years. With tearful eyes, we returned home. Home felt like a prison to me. I felt like there was no hope for the future, and darker days were waiting for us—which actually happened. We experienced months, and then years, of not going to school. School was no longer like before, and there were no lessons to learn.

I used to sit in my room and cry. It was hard for me not to be able to go to school all of a sudden, and not to be able to spend happy times with my friends like before. People used to say we should stay hopeful and things would get better, but I no longer had hope.

After a while, another piece of news was broadcast on TV. The Taliban said that women were not allowed to go outside alone, and if they wanted to go out, a male guardian must accompany them. Their way of thinking was really strange to me. Day by day, they brought more rules and made religion harder for people.

What was more surprising than the rules was that nothing like this is written in the Qur'an—that women are not allowed to get an education. And no valid source confirms this lie.

Anyway, the days passed as if there was no life at all. We heard terrifying news about what horrible things were happening to innocent people. Every day the condition of girls being away from school and education made me more disturbed—and I was one of them.

This awful situation continued. Some families forced their daughters into early marriages. I saw girls being treated violently just because they defended their rights. The painful condition of the girls in my homeland always affected me deeply.

And until today, although several years have passed since the schools were closed, the situation of the girls remains the same. But I have become stronger than before. With the few resources I have, I started online learning and did not let this huge injustice break me. Even though I went through months of depression and hopelessness, seeing the crisis in my country has made me stronger.

I believe that only through education can we rebuild our country, and this belief has motivated me to work hard and continue my online studies.

As Rumi says: “If everything around you seems dark, look again, you may be the light.”

I have come to believe in this sentence—that in the middle of all this darkness, maybe I am the light, and so are girls my age. I know it’s not easy, but it’s not impossible either. Girls will rise again and show the world how we did not accept oppression and how we kept going, becoming stronger than before.

This is the story of Afghan girls.

They did not let us have dreams, but we still dreamed.

They did not let us speak, but we broke the silence.

They did not let our voices be heard, but each of us became a voice.

This is the Afghan girl. This is our courage—we continue to fight and never give in to injustice.

Hoping for the day my country will be free and rebuilt.

BECAUSE ONE CONNECTION CAN CHANGE *Everything*

Written by Roba Khder

I feel grateful to all that I am, and all that I've been through. I am grateful for my soul, which feels with a depth that sometimes overwhelms me. I keep reminding myself that this is what makes us humans. To feel deeply is a holy gift which ignites us to work and move in the direction of goodness. To feel deeply is the resource and the essence of a human being and the essence of peace. To feel deeply is to be a part of a whole, is to truly and sincerely share with the world a language that transcends any place or time or identity. I'm thankful for the chance to exist in this magnificent universe, so that I may solidify even a small contribution to make another human being feel beauty, hope, or connection.

This kind of empathy is what allows us to relate to "the other," no matter who they are or where they are from. Think about a time you

read a good book and said "I do feel seen by the writer! They described exactly what I've experienced." Right there, this is a connection with someone you may not have met before. Realizing that all humans, regardless of their status, ethnicity, color, religion, or nationality, share the same emotions is such a powerful tool to be a better communicator and influencer! What if I told you that by having a good connection with your fellow humans, you can literally be a hero and save lives, and prevent casualties during hostile times?

As an Egyptian Fulbright scholar who has lived in Pennsylvania, United States for a year, I could tangibly see the fruits of the real connections I made during my time there, and the positive impact it had on me in times of crisis.



After returning back home to Egypt from the U.S., I woke up one morning to hear the devastating news of a war breaking out in the neighboring Gaza Strip. My heart was aching for all the innocent lives abruptly taken. Two months passed and still no word from my Fulbright colleague in Gaza. Then, finally—one brief signal. Her message was short, and urgent: I need to get out.

There was no manual for this. I wasn't a diplomat or an aid worker. Just someone who couldn't look away. I began reaching out, pulling on every thread I could find—former classmates, distant contacts, anyone who might know something about borders, policies, etc. I learned she would need an invitation, legal backing, money—more than I had, but not more than we could gather.

People responded, friends joined in, alumni I hadn't spoken to in years sent donations, advice, and names. I formed a team to manage the campaign, update the page, and handle the funds. I ran between Cairo offices, stood for hours at crowded doors trying to get her name on the borders list. Her relatives came with me,

and we pushed through the chaos together.

In the background, I was coordinating everything— an immigration lawyer in the U.S., professors willing to write letters, and institutions willing to listen. I wrote appeal after appeal, even guessing the CEO's email address at a prominent international education nonprofit until I reached him. He replied, and helped. Eventually, we secured her a safe pathway. My host institution in the U.S. agreed to host her thanks to the good relationship I had with them. We also arranged housing and healthcare for when she arrived. Looking back, I realize this wasn't just about one person helping another, it was rather a whole network coming alive with purpose, and thanks to the trust I'd built during my time in the U.S.

Leadership, I've learned, isn't about standing alone. It's about friendship, good connection, asking for help, listening, clear communication, coordinating, and trusting people to step in with their strengths. In times of crisis, it's not the loudest voice that makes the difference—it's the one that brings others together.

I, then, started working remotely with the British International School of Gaza (BISG) as a high school teacher of English & Social Studies. I was humbled by the students' strength and resilience. Studying for international exams under airstrikes? That's not just strength—that's grace.

But I also noticed something. When I mentioned living in the U.S., the students were curious. Some asked thoughtful questions about American people and culture. Others asked why the West allows Gaza's destruction. Their questions were fair. I knew then I needed to help them *connect* with people from the West. Real people. I wanted them to see that curiosity can lead to understanding, and understanding can lead to peace. Additionally, I realized that building a mindset of peace within them is part of the collective healing process they all should be aided through. I strongly believed in what Victor Frankl, the psychologist and a holocaust survivor, explained: those who can thrive in their life and do great things after tragedy are the ones who have the ability to find meaning behind hardships. My students needed meaning and connection.

That's when the idea of peace leadership truly took root in my work.

Peace leaders aren't born with all the answers—they just carry a vision bigger than their fear. My peace leader role model is President Mohamed Anwar El Sadat. His 1977's bold and controversial speech in the Israeli Knesset wasn't just about diplomacy or treaties. It was a moment of deep vulnerability and truth. A leader of an Arab nation, standing before former enemies, saying "No more war. No more bloodshed."

“Peace leaders aren't born with all the answers— they just carry a vision bigger than their fear.”

What stood out in that speech wasn't only the political weight, but the human language. Sadat spoke not as a distant head of state, but as a father, a neighbor, and a man who had witnessed too much loss. He said, "I have come to you with an open heart... so that we might establish a durable peace together." That kind of honest, empathetic, and painfully brave leadership is what we are trying to nurture in our students now.

My now good friend Candace McCoy, the immigration lawyer who worked with me on my colleague's rescue mission, connected me with some friends from Culturing Peace and Euphrates Institute, who both work in the field of peacebuilding. From the very beginning, they were excited to collaborate and support our students in connecting more deeply with the world and with themselves. They have generously offered their time and energy to run weekly and monthly conversation sessions, serving as informal peace education. In these gatherings, we practice peace—not just by talking about it, but by living it. We explore what it means to find peace within ourselves, how to express that peace in our relationships, and how to lead with it. We dive into culture, self-expression, and even let the students take the lead sometimes, guiding sessions around the theme of peace leadership.

Like Sadat, we try to help our students speak with courage about their pain, their dreams, and their desire for connection—even when it is not easy. Peace leadership, I’ve learned, is not about being the strongest voice in the room—it’s about having the heart to listen, and the humility to step into unknown spaces with hope.

I could especially see real results when the students joined one global call which amplified Palestinian voices—with participants from all over the world—and they spoke confidently and preached like peace leaders! Honestly, isn’t that something? Students who were wondering about the thoughts of “the other” now have the skills to connect, communicate effectively, and influence others! To me, this would always be a reminder for why peace education matters so deeply. It’s not just about teaching history or theory; it’s about transformation. When students begin to see people they once saw as “the other” as human, as storytellers, as compassionate listeners, as peers, something shifts. From a curious question and a moment of listening to speaking up, holding space, and building bridges. That’s the magic.

Peace education is not a curriculum, nor does it hand out answers. It creates space for hard questions and brave constructive conversations. It nurtures empathy in a world that often encourages indifference. Watching students step into that space—messy, honest, courageous—gives me hope. Not a vague, idealistic hope, but a grounded, practical one. Because if they can do it in a classroom or on a global call, they can do it anywhere.

If you’ve read this far and felt something stir in you, maybe it’s time to explore what peace leadership might look like in your life.



Roba Khder

Whether you are an educator, a parent, a student, or just a human who cares and wants to help in manifesting peace, know that it takes a village, but a village always needs someone to lay the cornerstone. You don’t necessarily need to know exactly where the stone should go—you just need the intense and deep realization of how crucial this one stone is and the courage to begin to build and put together the rest of the stones, even if you have to place that first stone in the middle of nowhere and even if no one else has joined you yet!

Because one stone matters. One connection can change everything.

BUILDING PEACE, ABOLISHING WAR:

A Conversation with Phill Gittins on Peace
Education, Praxis, and Global Leadership

Written by Lisa Hilt & Phill Gittins



Phill presenting at a NewGen Peacebuilders workshop.

In May, Lisa spoke with [Phill Gittins](#), PhD, about his story, his current peace education work, and the opportunities and needs he sees for the future. Phill is currently the Education Director at World BEYOND War and sits on several boards, committees, and steering groups, including the Journal of Peace Education, Global Campaign for Peace Education, and Global Campaign on Military Spending UK. He has over 20 years of leadership, programming, and analysis experience in peace, education, psychology, youth, and community development. He has lived, worked, and travelled in over 60 countries across six continents; taught in schools, colleges, and universities worldwide; and trained thousands on peace and social change-related issues.

What brought you to peace education work and World BEYOND War? And what inspires you to do this work?

There's a long story and a short one - I'll start with the short version. I didn't enjoy school when I was a teenager, so I left early with no idea of what I wanted to do. While working at a factory, one of my colleagues suggested that I might be suited to being a youth worker. I was sceptical - I was only 16 at the time – but he introduced me to someone he knew who worked with young people, and I eventually trained as a youth worker. That marked the beginning of the path that partly led me to where I am now.

Fast-forward to years later. I went on to pursue multiple degrees. I have always studied and worked because I deeply value praxis (where critical reflection and action inform and strengthen one another). Over the years, alongside my degree and work in the area of youth and community practice, I also trained and worked as a psychotherapist and teacher before starting to pursue a Master's degree in Education.

Before I completed my Master's, I took a year off to travel around the world, and it was eye-opening in that it revealed how privileged I was to be born where I was and to have access to all these opportunities. I also witnessed the devastation caused by violence and conflict, and

it started me thinking: how can I utilize some of my skills and passion to work for peace? At that time, I had never encountered the concepts of peace education or peace and conflict studies, so I did what most people do: I Googled.

After discovering this new world, I shifted my focus to peace education. In my Master's research, I studied how young people in England and Bolivia learn about peace and conflict. I spent 10 months in Bolivia, volunteering in a youth offending prison and teaching at various universities. In 2012, I participated in the Rotary Peace Fellowship and pursued my PhD in International Conflict Analysis. As part of that, I developed a methodology and framework for peace education, which served as a foundation for two global peace education programs I helped to co-create, [NewGen Peacebuilders](#) (NGP) and [Peace Education and Action for Impact](#). I thought it would be good to use the focus of my PhD to inform something practical and potentially global that I helped to create. I used the NGP program as a case study to show the process of working with communities. After finishing my PhD and before joining World BEYOND War in 2019, I continued working with NGP, initiating and leading the piloting of the model outside the U.S. and with university-aged students in Latin America, as well as supporting several initiatives within the U.S.

“There is no viable approach to sustainable, just, and lasting peace or development that does not address arguably the biggest threat to peace and development: the war system.”

Returning to your question about inspiration—what brought me to this work—it revolves around asking: How can we think differently about education and youth work, and how can we influence what little we can? I have always been drawn to the informal side of education. Even before I fully understood why, it made me aware of the limitations of formal education: in how it's structured, what it prioritizes, and how it approaches learning and development. I have always tried to blur the lines between study and practice, learning and action. In peace work, particularly, there is often a divide between thinkers and doers, between theorists and practitioners, but they should inform one another. That is something I aim to bridge in my work, improving both along the way. While I deeply value inner peace and peace with others—as a therapist, I understand that is important—I believe real change also entails understanding and challenging the larger systems at play.

In the end, while there have been multiple inspirations and motivations, I would not be here today if it weren't for the youth worker I met when I was 16. I am very sure of that.

Tell us about your current work with World BEYOND War.

Two things differentiate World BEYOND War.

First, we are global in scope. We are a small team but work with an extensive network: individuals and organizations in 202 countries have signed our peace pledge; we work with chapters and affiliates worldwide and have 3000+ alumni who have taken our courses. We understand that if we want to replace the war system with the peace system, it needs to be global in scope while ensuring the work is contextualized.

The second, and this is probably the most important thing that differentiates us from other organizations, is that we are not just focused on ending specific wars but the institution of war, the system that prepares, plans, and profits from the ongoing wars around the world. Within that war system also lies the military-industrial-media-academic complex (MIMAC).

There is no viable approach to sustainable, just, and lasting peace or development that does not address arguably the biggest threat to peace and development: the war system.

What does World BEYOND War envision or hope to see regarding a peace system?

There are many ideas out there about what a peace system should be. Our approach centers on three interconnected strategies, accompanied by key components.

The first is demilitarizing security: shifting from militarized and national security to broader notions of human, common, and ecological security. The second is managing conflict without violence, rooted in practices of nonviolence and nonviolent action, among other things. The third, creating a culture of peace, is more subtle but just as vital—focusing on the psychological and cultural foundations needed to move away from a culture of war.

Peace systems already exist in many parts of the world, but we need to learn more from them and to scale them, so they are as global and comprehensive as the war system is now.

Can you tell us a little about World BEYOND War’s peace education work?

As an organization, we have three main strategies: education, activism, and media and communications. We focus on educating about, for, and towards peace and away from war and militarism. We do that in many ways, including online courses, webinars, podcasts, workshops, factsheets, and books.

Our online courses have participants from all around the world. So far, over 3,000 people have completed our courses. The youngest person we have had in a course was 13, and the oldest (I know of) was 94. She talked about World War II in the class. She was so articulate. I think ‘significant’ education should be like a learning laboratory, where diverse people are brought together to learn with and from each other. We invite guest speakers with experience in the topic to lead and facilitate the course modules. We try our best to provide good content, and that is important, but the real magic happens between the participants and facilitators.



Phillip presenting at Alliance for Peacebuilding event (2019).

Our courses cover various topics, including War Abolition 101 and 201; War and the Environment; Media and Communications for Peace, Unarmed Civilian Defense (UCD); and War, Peace, and Law. They address the war and peace systems and respond to current and relevant issues. For example, in the War and Environment course, we try to help participants understand the need to address the war system, since the military is one of the biggest polluters and users of fossil fuels on the planet. In the UCD course, we explore nonviolent alternatives to war and answer the question: What can citizens do to protect themselves when militaries attack?

We also have a joint program with Rotary called Peace Education and Action For Impact (PEAI), a peacebuilding and leadership program focused on youth. The program is youth-led and intergenerational, and centers around cross-cultural learning, dialogue, and action.

Since the pilot in 2021, PEAI has impacted youth, communities, and organizations in 19 countries across five continents. Each country has a national project team of 10 young people aged 18 to 35 and four adults. They participate in 6 weeks of online learning, followed by 8 weeks of action, during which the group completes a project in their community.

Each country project is context-specific but designed around the three strategies of World BEYOND War's peace system: demilitarizing security, managing conflict without violence, and creating a culture of peace. In Nigeria, the team researched school kidnappings and shared their findings in a policy brief. A joint Ukraine-Russia team of young people offered online peace education and cultural exchange to schools in both countries. In Cameroon, the team launched a campaign to boost youth leadership in peacebuilding, earning recognition from the Minister. There are many more, but these examples give a sense of the global work being done.

Looking to the future, what opportunities do you see for peace education and peace leadership in this area?

In 2024, I was commissioned by the Council of Europe to conduct a feasibility study focused on peace education in non-formal learning and youth work. The conclusions and recommendations were approached, and we are moving forward with the next steps. This includes working, as lead author, with a drafting group to prepare a Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to member States on peace education, for adoption by the statutory bodies in 2025, followed by the development of resources in 2026

to support implementation at the national level. This work can influence peace education policy and practice across the Council's 46 member states. The feasibility study allowed me to investigate some of the great work out there and to look at what is missing, much of which is likely relevant beyond Europe. A missing element in many peace and security efforts is a focus on the war system. Much more could be done to educate people on how this system not only undermines the prospects for peace and security but also hinders progress and sustainable development.

Peace education should be adapted to specific contexts, and while there are multiple different traditions, several guiding principles define it. One of the things that sets peace education apart—its *raison d'être*—is its focus on personal and social transformation and its commitment to moving the world away from a culture of war and militarism towards a culture of peace and nonviolence.

When it comes to leadership, governments need a truly comprehensive approach that not only talks about a culture of peace but also confronts the culture of war. Nearly every government speaks of peace, yet few treat it as a legal right or invest in the things that make societies safer, more peaceful, and more sustainable. Global frameworks like the SDGs or the Institute for Economics and Peace talk about war's devastation but ignore the system that sustains it. Authentic leadership is not increasing military spending or saying, "we need to prepare for war to avoid war". It is the opposite: learning from countries like Costa Rica, which say no to violence and yes to peace by peaceful means. That is the kind of leadership we need, now more than ever.

I'm curious to hear more of your thoughts about the need for better alignment between research and practice.

Too often there is a gap between those who engage in the academic study of a topic and those who engage in its practice. Much of my career has been spent trying to bridge that gap. My PhD intentionally combined both inquiry and action. I wrote an article in 2019 called “Doing Participatory Action Research as a Doctoral Student in the Peace and Conflict Studies Field”. I argue that we should have more participatory action research within the peacebuilding field. This approach helps us to improve our research—as it is grounded in practice—and it helps inform our practice, ensuring it is grounded in research.

This is not just about peace work. It also has implications for how we think about the training and professional development of people entering the peace field. It is striking how someone can move from undergraduate study to a Master's, to a PhD without ever having real on-the-ground experience, yet still be regarded as an expert. Much more could be done to ensure the ‘experts’ in academic knowledge understand the importance of real-world impact. My eight months of participatory research in Bolivia taught me far more than any short visit could. By listening and engaging deeply, I built trust. I learned things I could never have learned from the typical “travelling scholar” visits to conduct interviews and leave, like when a Minister asked me to share findings in a way that would be useful locally. That led to a youth-led event with the Ministry of Education. That event did not count toward my PhD; from a scholarly point of view, it is not

“To have lasting and just peace, we have to take a stance that is both pro-peace and anti-war.”

recognized as “good work” but I think that is an overly narrow view. Yes, we need scholarly articles, but we also need flexibility and responsiveness to local needs. In the best cases, work should be both informative and actionable.

Is there anything else you want to share with readers?

There is a need for blue-sky thinking and traditional scholarship. Still, I think part of peace work is about finding balance. We talk about this in World BEYOND War's forthcoming book, *From a War System to a Peace System: A Guide to a World BEYOND War* (which builds on previous editions of the book called *A Global Security System: An Alternative to War*). We talk about “transformative oscillation”: balance between inner and outer, global and local, study and practice, North and South, present and future. It is never either/or. It is both/and.

In addition, to improve the prospects for achieving lasting peace, many in peacebuilding may need to extend their identity to include being against war. Ironically, while nearly all are for peace, many are not aligned with being against war. While it is essential to promote peace with self and others, we must also name and address the elephant in the room: the war system. To have lasting and just peace, we have to take a stance that—as World BEYOND War frames it—is both pro-peace and anti-war.

Please visit the [World BEYOND War website](#) to learn more about Phill's work.



PEACE *B* DESIGN:

How HIVE is Reimagining Peace Leadership
and Education in Pakistan

Written by Dr. Aleen Bayard

In Pakistan, peace education is not merely an aspirational ideal. It is a vital strategy, fraught with the complexities of entrenched conflict, bureaucratic red tape, and extremist threats. And yet, from within this turbulence emerges a powerful example of intersectional peace leadership and education: the work of HIVE, a social impact organization led by Syed Ali Abbas Zaidi.

Interviewing Mr. Syed Ali Abbas Zaidi, the founder of HIVE, was an incredibly enriching experience that deepened my understanding of what transformational peace education can look like in practice.

His approach is both innovative and courageous—rooted in local realities and informed by global best practices. HIVE’s model redefines peace education by weaving together civic engagement, creative expression, and grassroots organizing in ways that are both contextually relevant and strategically effective. What stands out most is the intentionality behind every aspect of their work—from how they design culturally resonant programs to how they measure impact using tangible indicators of everyday peace. Mr. Zaidi’s insights challenge conventional notions of peacebuilding, which often are anchored chiefly in conflict management, and illuminate how education, when done thoughtfully, can be a radical tool for social cohesion, resilience, and long-term change.

"We define ourselves as a social impact organization to navigate the socio-political issues and security challenges," Zaidi explains. That identity also informs HIVE’s strategy and programmatic themes.



Ali delivering a keynote to students on the importance of tolerance (2024).

As Mr. Zaidi described HIVE’s programs, I marveled at how strategically their work reflected Johan Galtung’s vision and model of positive peace, which distinguishes between negative peace (the absence of direct violence) and positive peace (the presence of conditions that foster justice, equity, and sustainable harmony) and paints peace with a very broad brush.

Intersectional Peace in Practice

"Peace is a loaded term," Zaidi says. "It means different things to different people." HIVE’s model, therefore, is intersectional: community-specific approaches to peace tailored to local conditions and needs.



Female bikers during a bike rally under "reclaiming public spaces for all genders" campaign by HIVE (2021).

In some areas, women's suppression is the dominant challenge. "There, we promote women's leadership as a pathway to peace," Zaidi explains. "When women play an active civic role, the peace quotient in that region improves."

In other regions, environmental degradation creates conflict. Zaidi tells the story of two tribes clashing over grazing land after a shared water channel was destroyed. "We convened a citizen body, redirected a stream, brought in climate experts, and helped restore water access," he recounts. "The conflict deescalated."

Digital hate and misinformation dominate urban challenges. "We use tech for peace," Zaidi says. "We engage TikTok and Metta to take down hate content, while using digital campaigns to promote tolerance."

Education as an Instrument of Peace

Education is another vital gateway to making a local impact. HIVE's efforts go beyond formal schooling to embed conflict resolution and civic leadership training into learning environments. And in many cases, what distinguishes HIVE from other "peace education" initiatives is the focus on learning environments that are literally down the street.

Zaidi offers a compelling example from a refugee camp: "There was a school hosting Afghan refugee children in tension with the host community. We helped re-energize the school and added peace content—conflict mediation, interfaith harmony, and community leadership." This content was delivered weekly by a PhD in conflict management. "We never teach just for education's sake," he emphasizes. "Our goal is peace. Education is the vehicle."

Vocational training for women also incorporates peace elements. "We teach skills to help women earn income, but we also embed modules on civic agency, conflict management, and leadership," Zaidi says.

Rethinking What Peace Education Looks Like

HIVE's approach is radically different from legacy peace education models.

"We never walk into a community and say, 'we are peace experts'", Zaidi explains. "Instead, we ask communities, 'What does peace mean to you?' Then we design interventions around those lived experiences. We work with local people. We co-produce solutions." By doing so the interventions have a level of authenticity, integration and sustainability that cannot be measured through traditional tests and other classroom metrics.

HIVE's methodologies include Outcome Harvesting, Everyday Peace Indicators (EPI), and "Civic Imagination and Worldbuilding," a framework Zaidi co-developed with USC Professor Henry Jenkins. "It's about imagining a desirable future and then co-designing how to get there," he says.

Measuring Peace Through Daily Realities

Frustrated with those traditional (and often vague), donor-driven metrics, HIVE adopted the Everyday Peace Indicators framework. "We were filling out reports for donors, not measuring real change," Zaidi says. "So, we asked: How do you define peace in your everyday life?"

The answers are as unique as the communities.

"In Lahore, Christian boys said they felt at peace when they could wear their crosses in public without harassment, particularly when competing on a soccer field. In a Taliban-influenced area, people said they checked for satellite dishes before moving—if a neighborhood had antennas, it meant the Taliban's grip was weaker." That type of indicator is a stunning example of what a social impact organization can accomplish.

In one nomadic community, peace was manifested through a very unlikely activist: a toilet. In that instance, the women had no safe, private or hygienic place besides a latrine. That lack of space constrained the women's freedom of movement and, therefore, their independence. "We installed portable toilets. Soon, women started hosting tea gatherings. It gave them agency, privacy, and even reduced domestic violence," Zaidi shares. "A woman told us, 'Now I don't have to wake my husband to use the toilet at night.' That's peace."

In Hazara Shia communities, who have suffered genocidal violence, psychosocial support was key. "Mental health became their peace indicator," he says. "We partnered with specialists to deliver trauma-informed programs."

From Engineer to Peacebuilder

At the heart of HIVE's success is its founder and director, Syed Ali Abbas Zaidi—a visionary leader whose unorthodox career arc has uniquely positioned him to challenge the status quo of peacebuilding in Pakistan. Zaidi's journey into peace leadership was unconven-

tional. Trained as an aeronautical engineer and employed by Siemens and Pakistan's military-industrial sector, his career pivoted when terrorism surged in the late 2000s.

"Bombs were going off in hotels, schools, and universities. No one was offering a counter-narrative," he recalls. "We couldn't join any peace movement—because there wasn't one. So, we became the movement."

Over the past decade, he has launched multiple civic initiatives including Pakistan Youth Alliance, Khudi, Dil Say Pakistan, and finally HIVE—all aimed at addressing Pakistan's most pressing issues, from violent extremism and interfaith discord to civic apathy and misinformation.

Zaidi has spearheaded more than 30 projects across Pakistan focused on peacebuilding, interfaith harmony, civic education, and social innovation. His work has been recognized globally: he is profiled in a 2012 Al-Jazeera documentary, "Pakistan: The New Radicals," as one of nine of the most influential activists in the world. He has received accolades including the Intercultural Innovation Award by the United Nations and BMW Group and was honored as the "Bravest Blogger of the World" by The Daily Beast. His projects have frequently been cited by international think tanks as models of best practice in the P/CVE (preventing and countering violent extremism) field.

In recognition of his extraordinary commitment and global impact, Zaidi was selected by former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan as one of ten Young Leaders for the "Extremely Together" initiative of the Kofi

Annan Foundation. Through that fellowship, Zaidi deepened his work in global peace advocacy, while emphasizing the critical role of youth-led, locally rooted interventions.

Despite his international recognition, Zaidi remains deeply grounded in his belief that transformative change must come from within communities. "The dream of a plural, progressive, and equal Pakistan," he says, "can only be realized through meaningful collaboration across society's fault lines."

Community-Led Learning

HIVE doesn't only intervene—they train. Zaidi recounts their creative approach with children in schools: "We simulate conflict by giving fewer chairs than children and asking them to solve it. The kids form committees and negotiate. It works 80% of the time."

But not all issues are easy to address. "Gender and LGBTQI topics are tough in some regions. There's pushback," he admits.

Still, HIVE persists—always contextualizing, always localizing.

"We never teach just for education's sake.

Our goal is peace.

Education is the vehicle."

Toward Decentralized Peace Architecture

Our conversation also explored the broader implications for peace leadership. "We need a decentralized peace architecture," Zaidi argues. "Too much policy is designed by people far from the front lines."

He advocates for participatory action research and stronger ties between policymakers and peace practitioners. "Collaboration must be rooted in empathy and first-hand experience."

A Blueprint for the Future

In 2025, HIVE will launch three new projects in 30 neighborhoods, each beginning with the same question: What does peace mean to you?

For more information about HIVE, here is its website: <https://hive.org.pk/>

For more information about Every Day Peace Indicators, click here: <https://www.everydaypeaceindicators.org/>



Ali during a training session on peacebuilding with urban youth in Lahore, Pakistan (2020).

EDUCATION ABOVE ALL:

Protecting the Right to Education and Building Peace



Photo credit: Education Above All Foundation

Written by Siraj Khan

Insecurity and conflicts have increased in severity, duration, and modality. As a result, the fundamental human right to education continues to face relentless threats, creating a dangerous environment for children, youth, and educators. The Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA) reported approximately 6,000 attacks on schools and education in 2022 and 2023, affecting over 10,000 students and educators. Amidst this fragility, there are significant pockets of resilience dedicated to safeguarding learning and building pathways towards lasting peace.

The Education Above All (EAA) Foundation is one such organization committed to working for the provision of quality education and safe learning environments which can serve as a foundation for building peaceful societies. Established in 2012 by Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, Education Above All Foundation is a global foundation with a profound mission: to transform lives of millions through education and economic opportunities. Operating with unwavering commitment in some of the world's most challenging environments to unlock the full potential of every child and youth, the Foundation believes that education is the single most effective means of reducing poverty and fostering peaceful and just societies.

EAA's dedication extends beyond the mere provision of schooling; it recognizes the intrinsic link between education and sustainable peace. Embodying the spirit behind Kofi Annan's statement that "Education is quite simply, peace-building by another name", EAA's multifaceted approach not only ensures access to quality education but also works to actively protect it from attack, promoting social cohesion and resilience as foundations for peace.

Programming for Polycrises: Protecting Education at All Cost

The Foundation's work is strategically channeled through its programs, addressing the educational needs of vulnerable and marginalized individuals and communities. These programs work holistically to strengthen the right to education and the education lifecycle.

Since its inception, EAA's Protect Education in Insecurity and Conflict (PEIC) program has been instrumental in strengthening legal and policy frameworks necessary to protect the right to education in insecurity and conflict and advocating for the rights of learners. PEIC envisions a world where the right to education is protected for all individuals and communities affected by conflict, including the most vulnerable. To achieve this, PEIC works along three main areas of strategic intervention: (1) Data and Advocacy, ensuring there is accurate data to allow a consistent level of advocacy, awareness-raising, informed development of

relevant law and policy, and education on the issues, prevention, and resilience; (2) Thought Leadership, to address the various challenges and potential solutions; and (3) Law and Policy, the provision of technical assistance to strengthen law and policy frameworks to hold perpetrators of attacks on education to account.

Since it was launched in 2012, Educate A Child (EAC) spearheaded significant breakthroughs in the lives of out-of-school children worldwide, focusing on enrollment in primary education through partnerships and innovative solutions. EAC crucially mitigates the impact of conflict, poverty and forced displacement on marginalized children and provides routes back into education for those out of school. To date, EAC has enrolled more than 14.6 million out of school children including more than 7.3 million from fragile and conflict-affected countries.

For refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), Al Fakhoora provides a lifeline by



Photo credit: Education Above All Foundation

placing students at the heart of its programming and tailoring scholarships to their students' unique contexts. Believing in their indefatigable strength and adaptability, Al Fakhoora works to empower young people whose education has been disrupted by conflict to continue their education and become engaged and productive individuals, excelling and leading their communities even in the most challenging circumstances. Since April 2024, Al Fakhoora has committed to provide over 10,000 higher education scholarships through its Qatar Scholarship program, benefiting the most vulnerable communities and engaging youth with the potential for positive change.

Complementing these efforts, Reach Out To All (ROTA) has a mandate to focus on 'Education for Climate Action', recognizing the interconnectedness of global challenges and the role of education in building a sustainable and peaceful future. ROTA supports the integration of climate change education in secondary schools and capacity building for refugee and community-based youth in green skills.

Through the cutting-edge work of the Innovation Development directorate, more than 4.2 million

learners have benefitted from Education Above All's award-winning Internet Free Education Resource Bank (IFERB), 800,000 of whom are from conflict countries, including Ukraine, Palestine, Sudan, and Yemen. IFERB provides accessible, cost-free, interdisciplinary learning modules to ensure continued access to education despite crises and conflict.

EAA Foundation's focus on education is not limited to formal education but positively recognizes opportunities after education to empower younger generations to develop their infrastructure, economies and workforces to provide an environment where they can grow and flourish professionally, whether through artisan crafts or vocational training, professional development, or higher studies. EAA's Silatech program tackles youth unemployment by creating large-scale job creation, promoting entrepreneurship, and improving access to capital and markets for young people. The program has connected over 3.3 million youth to economic activities in over 23 countries, including conflict-affected regions such as Sudan, Somalia, and Syria, through partnerships with UNDP, FAO, the Qatar Fund For Development (QFFD), and UNHCR.

“To build peace for future generations, it is crucial to provide support for those who have already been, or are still, affected by the trauma that accompanies conflict.”

A Proactive Stance Against Attacks on Education Worldwide

Attacks on education are defined by the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA) as "any intentional threat or use of force—carried out for political, military, ideological, sectarian, ethnic, or religious reasons—against students, educators, and education institutions."

Other forms of attack include the denial of humanitarian access for children, the use of schools for military purposes and structural and other means of preventing children from their right to accessing education. The Foundation has been and continues to bring attention to these grave violations against children, students, and education professionals.

EAA Foundation has played a pivotal role in supporting the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA) since its establishment in 2010. This unique inter-agency coalition brings together leading organizations from the fields of education, human rights, and international humanitarian law to address the global problem of targeted attacks on education during armed conflict. GCPEA's flagship report, Education under Attack, is published every two years and profiles countries experiencing significant patterns of attacks on education, verifying crucial data and analysis.

EAA Foundation also contributed to the establishment of the International Day to Protect Education from Attack, declared by the UN in 2020, and co-organizes its annual observance on 9 September. This day serves as a vital reminder of the criticality of protecting education from attack by both state and non-state actors across the globe.

Law, Policy, and Data to Protect Education from Attack

In addition to the existing international treaties and conventions that protect children and schools as civilian institutions, domestic and international consensus is crucial to ensure common standards and practice in the protection of education from attack. To this end, EAA Foundation, supported by the State of Qatar and the Kingdom of Norway, played a central role in the establishment of the Safe Schools Declaration, an inter-governmental political commitment to protect students, teachers, schools, and universities from the worst effects of armed conflict. To date, 121 states have endorsed the declaration, signifying an important growing global consensus on respecting the civilian nature of educational institutions and developing good practices for their protection, especially during armed conflict.

The most recent innovation in this context is the Track Attacks on Education (TRACE) data portal, launched in 2020, which uses the latest



Photo credit: Education Above All Foundation

verified data to identify and track the location, modality, and frequency of attacks on education. The portal serves as a crucial tool for monitoring attacks on education during insecurity and conflict, providing early warnings for attacks on education, and valuable insights for advocacy and other interventions.

Fostering Peace through Education and Psychosocial Support

EAA Foundation recognizes the crucial role of education in promoting social cohesion and reducing violence as strategic and practical ways for building peace for current and future generations. To build peace for future generations, it is crucial to provide support for those who have already been, or are still, affected by the trauma that accompanies conflict. As a result, EAA Foundation's projects often integrate psychosocial and emotional support to address the trauma and stress experienced by children and educators in conflict-affected areas.

Through its Al Fakhoora Programme, the Foundation addresses food security and hygiene,

as well as psychosocial support, for vulnerable populations in an active war zone, including children and displaced families in Palestine. Similarly, the Self Learning Programme (SLP) in Syria, a collaboration between EAA Foundation's Educate A Child (EAC) program and UNICEF, integrates learning materials and teacher training with psychosocial support to cater to the needs of children with limited access to education due to the ongoing conflict, and create safe learning environments enabling more than 360,000 out-of-school children to continue their education.

EAA Foundation's Ukraine Emergency Education Programme focused on social-emotional learning, refugee integration, and mitigating learning loss for Ukrainian refugees. The program addressed mental health challenges through educational content broadcast on TV and online. The Mobilising the Power of Grassroots Youth project in Uganda and South Sudan, a collaboration between EAA Foundation's PEIC and ROTA programs and the Whittaker Peace and Development Initiative (WPDI) mobilized over 678,000 youth from conflict-affected regions through training and engagement in conflict resolution education, fostering a culture of peace and recognizing the critical role of young people for long-term peace and development.

Empowering a New Generation of Peace Leaders

EAA Foundation's commitment to sustainable peace extends to fostering peace leadership among youth and within communities. The Foundation supports initiatives that equip individuals with the skills and knowledge necessary to address conflict and build peace at various levels. To that end, EAA has established

“Investing to protect education does not only benefit individuals, it leads to a more peaceful and sustainable world.”

the EAA Youth Advocacy Programme as well as an international EAA - OHCHR Youth Advisory Board comprised of talented young leaders from across the world who can act as agents for change. Alongside this, the Youth Empowerment System (www.youth4yes.com) is a platform developed in collaboration with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights aimed at strengthening awareness of human rights amongst youth and empowering them to better advocate for the rights of youth, especially the right to education. This is essential for building the foundations of peace in societies reeling from the impact of past and ongoing conflict. EAA Foundation facilitates the engagement of more young people and extends the global reach of this advocacy network under the social media campaign #UniteToProtect, to further amplify this message, reaching hundreds of thousands of youth and others across the globe.

Building Bridges through Partnerships

Effective collaboration with local and international partners is a cornerstone of EAA Foundation’s crisis response, boosting the impact of global and local educational and peacebuilding initiatives. The scale and complexity of the dual challenge of protecting education in conflict and fostering peace necessitates strong collaborations with various actors, including with local communities.

EAA Foundation deeply values partnerships and actively works with a wide range of actors,

including global partners like UNICEF and UNHCR, international NGOs, multilateral development banks, bilateral agencies, and newer partners such as municipalities and community-based local organizations. The Foundation also partners with humanitarian actors from civil society, including faith-based organizations and local entities, recognizing their strong presence on the ground, crucial contextual knowledge and the trust they have garnered among their communities. These partnerships highlight the importance of a unified approach in addressing the multifaceted challenges in conflict-affected settings.

Building a Legacy of Hope and Peace

The work of the Education Above All Foundation stands as a testament to the unwavering belief in the transformative power of education, even in the most volatile and insecure contexts such as war, conflict, displacement, and poverty. Through its diverse programs, proactive advocacy against attacks on education, programmatic interventions on accountability for attacks on education, capacity building to facilitate the reintegration of children formerly associated with armed groups, and a deep commitment to fostering psychosocial well-being and peace leadership, EAA Foundation is making a profound and lasting contribution to protecting education for sustainable peace.

By protecting educational institutions and personnel, ensuring access to quality education, and empowering individuals and communities with the tools for peacebuilding, EAA Foundation is not only mitigating the devastating effects of conflict but also laying the foundations for more resilient, cohesive, and peaceful societies.

TEACH US PEACE

Before the First Bullet

I saw calm women on the street,
Their children safe, the air was sweet.
No sound of sirens, no fear to flee;
Just laughter rising, wild and free.
That's the peace we long to keep.

No rubble, smoke, or school in flames,
No boys with guns, no warlike games.
Just books and dreams inside their hands,
And teachers drawing peaceful plans.
Don't wait to teach, while time still stands.

It's cheap right now, just words and will,
No coffins yet, no blood to spill.
But when the sky begins to burn,
And lessons cease, and none return,
You will wish you taught when there was time still.

Don't be the one who speaks too late,
When peace is ash and sealed by fate.
The best defense is minds aware;
Plant hope before there's none to care,
Before war poisons every gate.

So teach us peace while hearts are still,
Before the pull, before the kill.
Before the drums, before we fall,
Before the bullet silences all,
Teach us peace...before the call.

Peace Ed

GATEWAY

Written by Julie Lillie & Gal Kleinman

Picture a world where peace isn't just hoped for, it is actively taught and practiced. We are planting the seeds of that transformative educational reality – for everyone, everywhere. PeacEd Gateway (PEG) is a project and global movement that we co-lead with the help of an esteemed international advisory group. Believing deeply in the coming together of people, schools and organizations in realizing this peace education evolution, we invite you into the PeacEd Gateway story and community.

Gal's Why:

Founding Education for Global Peace

I am the son of a holocaust survivor and have witnessed war firsthand. I couldn't grasp the sheer insanity of the world we live in (I still cannot grasp it to this day). I've always been naturally inclined to think the world would be a better place if everybody just got along. Long I have pondered: why can't people live in peace?



With the birth of my sons, I realized more deeply that I did not want them, and all children worldwide, to experience war, violent conflict, and the trauma my family and I went through. I have often reflected and since realized that each one of us is born into a certain social background - a swirl of forces and systems - that shape who we are, including our identities, values, beliefs and behaviors.



Gal Kleinman

organization Education for Global Peace (EGP) in 2013.

EGP is committed to developing research, projects, and strategies on peace education at different levels worldwide. I imagined a tech platform and whole school approaches that would support the mainstreaming of peace education. From this, one of EGP's core projects, PeacEd Gateway, was conceived!

PeacEd Gateway (PEG) envisions a global transformation in how education is viewed and practiced whereby the foundation of education is to empower students to acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to build and sustain justice and peace in the world around them.

I believe that my suffering, and the suffering of multitudes of people today and throughout history, could have been avoided if we possessed the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to learn about each other and solve conflicts in constructive ways.

Ignorance and lack of communication breed fear and division, while understanding and connection can lead to unity and peace. So, for me, the answer to bringing about a world based on cultures of peace is mainstreaming peace education worldwide and forming meaningful connections between students worldwide as a basic part of education. In honor of this belief, I, with the help of others, created the nonprofit

As an entirely volunteer-run organization and project, it was oftentimes challenging to advance this project quickly, given the fullness of life and work for me and the initial advisory group. In these early stages, I realized how important it was to really get to know people and ensure they resonated with and were able to commit to engaging with the project.

I was pleasantly surprised one day back in February 2023 when Julie Lillie sent me a LinkedIn message and we discovered our shared passion for peace education. Julie has since been a wonderful driving force and visionary in the development of PEG. Sometimes you meet wonderful people!



EGP

Education for Global Peace



Julie Lillie

Julie's Why: Co-leading PeacEd Gateway

As a school-based preK-12 educator and leader for over 15 years, I've experienced and observed the prevalence of trauma, conflict, and violence affecting our children and school ecosystems. Violence can take many forms, including bullying, cyberbullying, fighting, weapon use, gang violence, sexual violence and emotional abuse and harassment. Anxiety, fear, insecurity, apathy, loneliness and depression impact the mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being of students and staff, rippling within and throughout the entire community.

Conversely, I've also experienced the profound care, love, joy, and connectedness possible within our schools and communities. These attributes, swirling with empowered action and hope, are inherent within all of our children, who, as I have repeatedly witnessed,

are born with the internal instructions to cultivate and seek peace. Illuminating and deepening these gifts for pursuing and sustaining peace ought to be the primary role of education.

Later in this issue, you can learn more about my story, *The Peace Pad*, and co-authored peace education guidebook. For now, follow me back to the winter of 2022-23 as I contemplated my purpose, role, and next steps in helping to evolve education. In meditation, I received a vision of 'flying geese', symbolizing helping to bring people, organizations and projects together to make the biggest collective impact that advances peace education. This channeled guidance illustrated the shared leadership and interconnectedness of the flock. I was shown how geese fly as a team, supporting each other, taking turns 'leading'



and resting, while coordinating their collective (in)action based on the available expertise, gifts, and resources. Reflecting on this vision, my intuition guided me to find and connect with, among others, Gal Kleinman and Education for Global Peace. Anchored by our emerging friendship and shared beliefs, I volunteered to join and co-lead PeacEd Gateway.

PeacEd Gateway Beliefs

We believe that leading dignified lives in peace is a basic human right and the most cross-cutting topic of our human existence as it affects each and every one of us. When we decide to prioritize creating cultures of peace above all else, this will be our greatest human achievement.

We believe that in order to create a world based on cultures of peace, we must educate for peace from a young age and throughout life. Peace education must be mainstreamed in educational systems worldwide.

We believe that the most important endeavor of our time is to transform the way we view and practice education to one based on peace education; so that we and future generations possess the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to live in peace with ourselves, others, and the world around us.

Overview of PeacEd Gateway

PeacEd Gateway's (PEG) mission is co-creating a global movement and collective uniting early childhood and K-12 educational institutions and settings, educators, students, and organizational partners with a common vision, meaning, and purpose to mainstream peace education. PEG is forging an educational transformation to one based on cultures of peace, meaningful connections, purpose, and solidarity in taking care of our fellow humans and the world around us.

The PeacEd Gateway provides a peacelearning framework and foundation for creating cultures of peace in schools; embodying the process of

PEG's Peacelearning Framework Pillars

- Well-being (mental, physical, emotional)
- Relationships & Communication
- Environment & Nature
- Diversity & Perspective
- Global Citizenship
- Empowerment & Service

acquiring the knowledge, skills and attitudes to live in harmony with oneself, with others, and with our environment. Though the primary audience and beneficiaries are K-12 schools worldwide, folks in early childhood settings, homeschoolers, after school or extended day programs, nonprofit organizations, and other informal schoolings will also benefit from access to PeacEd Gateway.

PeacEd Gateway's Objectives

- Design and offer a flexible and action-driven peacelearning framework and foundations for creating a culture of peace in schools.
- Create shared physical and virtual spaces that foster a worldwide sense of belonging and invite exploration and discovery of life's meanings and purpose.
- Empower students, educators, and the community to build a sustainable, just, and peaceful world for all.
- Form a collective of partners that will launch, sustain, and expand the PeacEd Gateway to facilitate the introduction, mainstreaming, and/or extension of peace education in early childhood and K-12 educational institutions and settings.

A key tool for supporting the implementation of the peacelearning framework and the foundations to transform our educational systems is through an *innovative and dynamic web platform* that empowers learners and educators worldwide to:

- **Connect** classrooms with each other, as a basic part of education, to form meaningful relationships - developing the profound connection of youth worldwide - and encouraging continuous facilitated dialogue and engagement between youth from different communities and countries.
- **Collaborate** and act as “solutionaries” on projects with peers in the community and around the world. Open classroom doors to interact and contribute more to the local community and also interact internationally (globally). This is “Glocalized” learning and teaching.
- **Access** quality and vetted peace education programs, curriculum, resources, research, and evaluations through a dynamic system based on needs, interests, and selected pathways.
- **Showcase** promising practices, programs, and successes from within the PEG community.
- **Unleash** the collective genius of a global community.
- **Learn** and interact in a safe, secure, and supportive physical to virtual environment.

From Vision to Reality

To date, PeacEd Gateway has been entirely volunteer run. With feedback from an

international advisory group, PEG’s strategic plans have been completed and foundations laid, including an overview document of the project and movement, key competencies of peace education, the peacelearning framework pillar, roles of core partners and collaborators, outline of 3-5 years of implementation and sustainment of cultures of peace in schools. Additionally, we have: researched comparable platforms, solutions and tech elements; compiled potential partners (150+), funders and collaborators to enhance, scale and sustain our efforts; and drafted strategies and impact metrics for expanding the PEG collective (partners and collaborators) and engaging stakeholders.

Though PEG is a passionate priority, we also have to balance it with our financial, relational, and physical realities and well-being needs. We are proud of all we have accomplished and are smiling as we look forward to the pilot and next stages of development. Yet, there is a desire to move faster and it is important that PEG is sustainable - and sustained.

The PEG Collective is a primary avenue for the sustainment of this work. Like geese flying together, core partners, stakeholders and collaborators will coordinate our actions, resources and support for our shared commitment to facilitate a global educational transformation to one that is based on a culture of peace. As we scale, the collective will include educators; schools and districts; colleges and universities; governments; community groups; researchers; organizations; program-curricular developers; Edtech companies; and businesses who believe the foundation of education is to empower students to acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to build and sustain peace in the world around them.



The PeacEd Gateway Collective

The PEG Collective formation has already begun, as illustrated through our preparation of a comprehensive grant application for the pilot implementation and study! Once funding is secured, we estimate the pilot will engage around 150 students and a minimum of 3 primary/elementary and 3 secondary classroom teachers. Our pilot coordinators are PEG members Whitney McIntyre Miller (Chapman University, CA-USA), Moses ABOLADE (Peace Education and Practice Network-Nigeria), Christina Barruel (The Peace Foundation, New Zealand) and Julie Lillie (The Peace Pad, AZ-USA). We will provide curriculum guides, training, and implementation support for the classrooms to collaborate asynchronously and synchronously about creating cultures of peace in their classrooms and schools. The groups will act as “solutionaries” in a safe and secure virtual environment, implementing projects aligned to a pillar of our framework.

Through this process, students and educators will form meaningful connections, and engage in intercultural dialogue, empowered sharing, and actionable problem solving as they implement and reflect on their glocalized peace projects.

“Like geese flying together, core partners, stakeholders and collaborators will coordinate our actions, resources and support for our shared commitment to facilitate a global educational transformation to one that is based on a culture of peace.”

How You Can Help

If you are feeling called to take peace action, there are many ways you can support PeacEd Gateway! Join us in building a global network and movement that is dedicated to bringing about a world based on cultures of peace through the power of education. Our multifaceted and coordinated approach will make PEG the primary destination and resource for PreK-12 peace education globally. Let's harness our collective genius, energy, connections, and resources to change educational priorities and policies to mainstream peace education and help create, build, and maintain a just, peaceful and sustainable world! Here are ways you can take action:

- Reach out about joining the PEG Collective as a core partner, stakeholder, or collaborator.
 - Donate and/or help set up a crowd source funding campaign for the pilot. Be a seed investor and establish a fund for a paid project coordinator position.
 - Express your interest in being a pilot or early-stage implementer.
 - Consult and/or help with the design and building of the platform.
- Intern to conduct grant research & spreadsheet entry.
 - Support the planning and execution of a future PEG summit.
 - Is your organization working on informal and non-formal peace education efforts? Make sure you are on the map! Mapping Peace Education.
 - Stay updated on EGP & PEG news by subscribing to The Peace Pad's newsletter.
 - Follow us and share about peace education on social media:
 - Facebook
 - Instagram
 - LinkedIn

It is time to come together and commit to shaping a future where every classroom, community, and nation embraces the power of peace education to build a more just, compassionate, and sustainable world for all. Join us in cultivating a future where peace isn't just a dream, it's a shared way of life!

Email info@educationforglobalpeace.org with a brief introduction and let us know how you would like to get involved!

“It is time to come together and commit to shaping a future where every classroom, community and nation embraces the power of peace education to build a more just, compassionate and sustainable world for all.”

PLANTING SEEDS OF PEACE IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Written by Sara Hagel and Heather Rowlands



Photo credit: Peacemakers

About Peacemakers

Peacemakers is a charity based in Birmingham, UK, dedicated to sharing skills and strategies to grow peace in schools and communities. We have nearly 40 years' experience, working in hundreds of schools of all types, equipping pupils and the adults who work with them with the skills, knowledge, and attitudes to build peace.

The majority of our work is with children in the primary phase (4 to 11 years old) and adults working in these schools, although we work with all age groups in all types of school. Peacemakers' trainers work directly with children and young people, delivering courses on aspects of peace education and training young people to be mediators. Other work is delivered to school staff, and focuses on introducing a peace curriculum into schools and developing a relational, restorative peaceful school environment. We work in schools across the West Midlands in the UK and last year we worked with 480 staff and 1,305 young people in 47 schools.

Our popular primary level peace education curriculum, *Learning for Peace*, supports teachers and other peace educators to roll out a program of peace education working with peace within, through peace between and among us, to peace in the world.

Why Peace Education Matters

The concept of peace in primary schools is not one often grappled with. Time is spent talking about conflict and 'falling out' and what can be done after something has gone wrong. But what about building peace?

Children's understanding of peace is complex and

nuanced. When we ask children what peace is, their responses range from 'no wars', 'no one falling out', and 'showing respect' to 'chilling', 'playing with my dog', and 'reading my book'. Their varied responses support our belief that peace can exist at all levels – personal and interpersonal, as well as structural which in turn reinforces our understanding of peace as interconnected, our peace weaves with that of others - we need to create it together.

Peace is much more than the absence of violence –it is something added, something we must actively build and nurture. Lasting peace needs the removal not only of direct violence but also the removal of indirect structural and cultural violence. We need to consciously make and build peace and justice in addition to peacekeeping. Peace lives where people have strong relationships, treat each other respectfully and equitably, and have a voice, the skills and tools to resolve and transform conflicts. We need peace to feel safe, to thrive as individuals and to come together well in communities.

That's why peace education matters.

“The change has been massive - children have worked on their speaking and listening skills, teamwork skills, alongside the peer mediator skills.”

“Their listening, thinking, remembering and working together skills have been practiced and have improved significantly.”

~ School Staff

Peace Education

Peace education is developing and practicing the tools, skills and confidence to build peace within ourselves, peace among those we live and work with, and peace in the wider world. Peace education helps people understand their reactions and interactions. It helps to build better relationships in the groups and communities which we are part of and to create the building blocks of peace in our wider world.

In schools, when there is learning for peace, children and young people understand and communicate their emotions and needs. They get along, work and play together better in class and the playground, and they navigate the complex issues they face as they grow up and become more engaged in the world around them. Learning for peace equips pupils and staff to positively address a range of issues and challenges they may experience or witness: injustice, division, conflict and change. Through our work, classroom staff and school leaders have told us that when there is learning for peace, children and young people are more likely to be able to get along, play together and communicate effectively.

“[The students] are generally more confident and problem-solving things themselves, taking initiative, and being assertive.”

~ Class Teacher

Just like we teach the building blocks of English and mathematics, children of primary school age can learn the fundamental skills they need to build peace – and schools and teachers can get support to help nurture these skills. Peace education encourages staff to reflect on their practice and their interactions with children to create peaceful communities.

“I enjoyed that we were taught how to do things in fun ways, like role plays, games and stories”

~ Year 5 child

Peace Pedagogy

Through our work in hundreds of primary schools, we know that it's not just what is taught that is important, it's equally important how it is taught.

Good peace education can be counterproductive if it is taught in a draconian way. We need to explore participative and democratic ways of learning and know as adults we are always modeling to others with our own behaviour and interactions. In their book *Positive Peace in Schools*, Cremin and Bevington explore this further. For them the how of peace education “needs to be grounded in praxis and in education that is accessible, engaging and democratic.” (Cremin and Bevington, 2017, p. 45).

Circles have been used by communities across cultures for centuries as a way of generating discussion and dialogue. However, they aren't always a regular part of many schools' pedagogy. Taking the opportunity to teach in circles allows

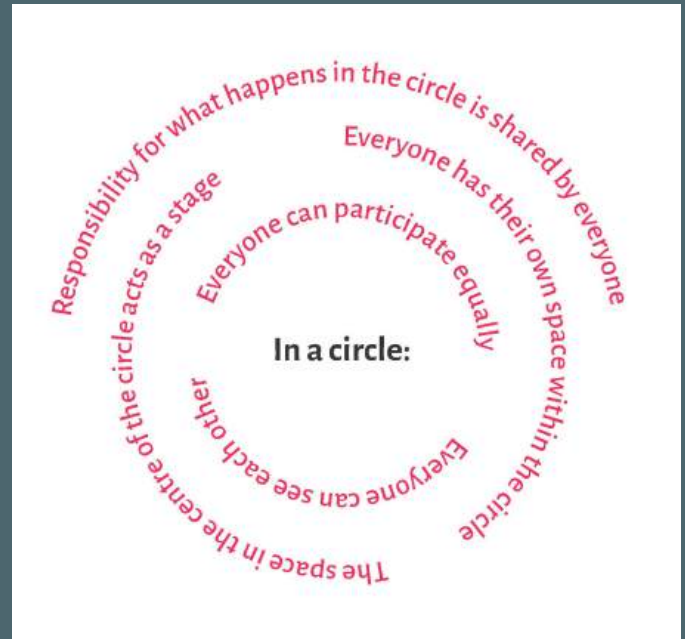
everyone to be seen and heard. Our practice of passing a talking piece around the circle allows us to hear all voices, including those who may otherwise feel excluded. Circles encourage empathy and understanding through listening to all voices and gaining different perspectives. They can also balance power by sharing responsibility for the circle with all its participants. Within a circle you can use the space creatively for games, group work, paired discussion and drama.

Equity and Diversity: Inclusion

There can be no peace without inclusion of all. If we recognize that we all come with unique backgrounds and needs, and to meet these needs we must adapt and accommodate, then we will be learning for peace through peace and creating an atmosphere where all can thrive.

Recognizing the diversity in classrooms enhances discussions about peace, conflict resolution and social justice. By exposing children to a variety of perspectives, we help them to develop empathy and critical thinking skills. Encouraging open dialogue about diversity allows children to challenge stereotypes and biases, promoting self-awareness and a sense of responsibility for inclusion. Each group is unique, and inclusion will look and feel different in different settings.

We must be mindful of marginalized voices within



In a circle...
Photo credit: Peacemakers

a circle, as well as challenge unchecked stereotypes, exclusive behaviors and unmet needs. Core foundations of building cooperation, emotional literacy, empathy and respect need to be in place to enable these challenges to be most effective.

Planting Seeds of Peace

In our experience of working with schools over the last few decades we have seen that where there is peace education, children have more confidence and empathy, develop their listening skills, find their voice and build emotional literacy, wellbeing and self-esteem.

“[The children] contribute to the safety of everyone.” ~ School leader

“There has been an increase in the children's skill development.” ~ Class teacher

“The course developed children’s ability to deal with conflict particularly the ability to empathise with both disputants and understanding the blame can escalate a conflict.”

~ Class teacher

Children understand how to get along better with each other and, when they don't, have confidence to deal with conflicts well. When peace is embedded in a school, children's ability to work together and cooperate grows and stronger relationships and respect for diversity are forged across the school community. Pupils can explore global issues and feel they can make a difference. Below are two case studies of the results of Peacemakers courses.

“[The children are] better able to identify emotions/empathy and, where issues may arise, [they have] increased awareness of each other's views/difficulties.”

~Year 4 teacher

Case Study 1 | Finding ways to get along

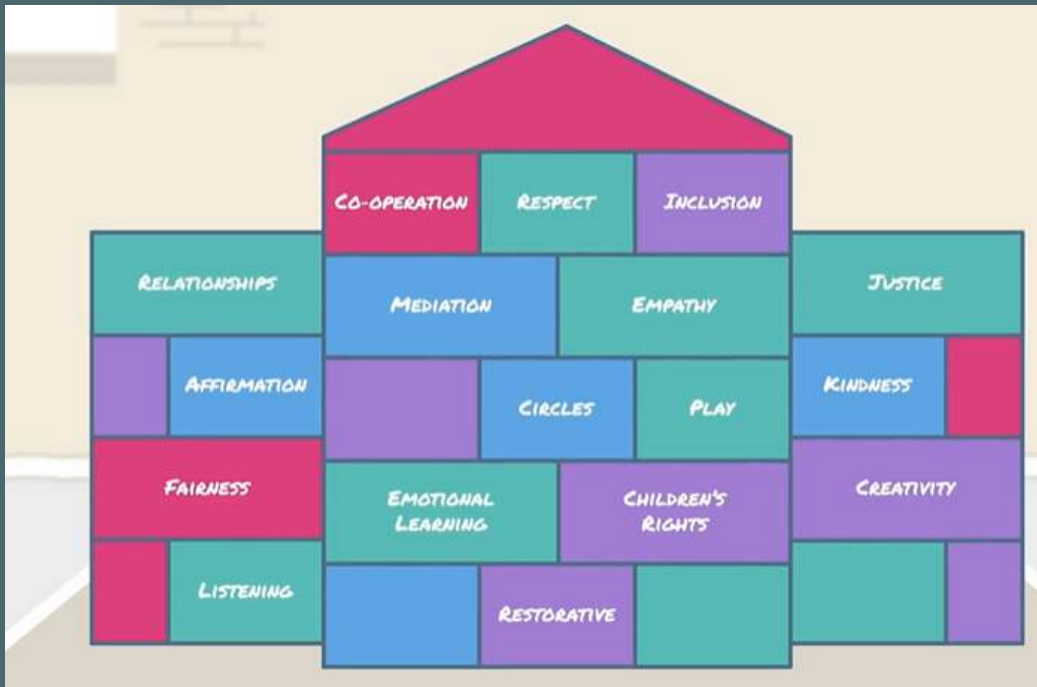
Before taking part in a Peacemakers course, Aisha and Mohammed just didn't seem to be able to get along in class, and their teacher often had to ensure they didn't work together. However, after learning how to talk about conflict and what happens when things go wrong in the course, they were able to develop new understanding and skills that allowed them to get through their differences.

After taking the course, Aisha came to her teacher one lunchtime, very upset. She said, 'Mohammed took the hoop off me, we used blaming language and now we've got to the top of the conflict escalator.' Her teacher asked if Aisha needed her to step in, or if they could use what they learnt in Peacemakers to talk it out themselves. By this time Mohammed had come in too. They decided to try and sort it out themselves. They talked in the classroom whilst their teacher worked at her desk and successfully resolved their disagreement. Later, the teacher asked Aisha and Mohammed to work together on a task – they did so all afternoon without any more issues.

Case Study 2 | From cynic to convert

New teacher, Steve, was cynical when asked to take part in a Peacemakers circle course. He had come from a business background; he and his students loved his high-energy lessons and his outcomes were good. Soon, though, he began to see how the children were engaging in the Peacemakers sessions. Children who were previously quiet were speaking up and taking a more active part. He saw competitive children sharing resources and asking for the opinion of others.

Over the weeks, Steve took a more active part in the circle games and, as a result, got to know more of the children in his class. He started to notice the learning from the circle was being applied in academic subjects and his pupils' group working skills were noticeably developed. By the end, Steve said himself that he moved from cynic to convert to the Peacemakers' circle process.



Build a peaceful school brick by brick | Photo credit: Peacemakers

Practical Peacebuilding in Schools

When a school builds peace it:

- Puts more of the peace-making in the hands of the children.
- Builds relationships to make connections with others.
- Builds an emotional understanding on how to get along with ourselves and each other.
- Learns to repair harm when things go wrong.

It also gives children opportunities to learn about the world we live in and the part we all play in building peaceful communities.

In our experience there are many ways schools can follow their journey to becoming a peaceful school – they can follow a restorative approach, or hold regular circles working through a peace curriculum, or train and support children to become peer mediators. Small actions make a big difference, and peaceful school communities are built brick by brick. You can start anywhere!

Recent teacher feedback (2024) shows that Peacemakers’ work had the following impacts on children:

- Greater confidence or maturity.
- Improved listening skills and communication.
- Increased social opportunities to build links with peers.
- Gained a reciprocal language to support problem-solving.
- Increased responsibility to solve their own problems and empowerment to do so.
- Greater empowerment to support others to solve their problems.
- Increased understanding of the impact of body language and eye contact upon others.

You can learn more about our approach and work in the new edition of [‘Learning for Peace: a toolkit for peace education in primary schools’](#), available from [Peacemakers’ website](#). Let’s spread the word about peace education and the difference it can make.

PROMOTING PEACE THROUGH ISLAMIC SCHOOLS:

Lessons from the Salam Institute for Peace & Justice

Written by Prof. Abu Nimer | Summarized by Nibal Salloum

Introduction

Islamic schools play a vital role in shaping both the academic and spiritual lives of students. These institutions go beyond conventional education by integrating Islamic teachings with modern subjects, ensuring that students gain knowledge while staying connected to their faith. Through religious instruction, students learn the Qur'an, Hadith, and Islamic law, helping them develop a strong moral compass. At the same time, these schools offer subjects like science, mathematics, and humanities, preparing students for professional success.

Beyond academics, Islamic schools act as community centers, fostering a sense of belonging among Muslim students, particularly in non-Muslim-majority countries. They provide a safe space where young people can explore their identity without fear of discrimination. Moreover, these schools emphasize social responsibility, encouraging students to engage in acts of charity, interfaith dialogue, and community service. By combining knowledge with ethics, Islamic schools prepare students to be not only educated individuals but also compassionate members of society.



Photo credit: Salam Institute for Peace and Justice

They incorporate Islamic values into daily learning, ensuring that students see their religion as an essential part of life. The curriculum blends religious and academic studies, teaching students that science, history, and ethics can all be understood through an Islamic lens. Arabic language learning is also a priority, helping students access religious texts in their original form.

Islamic schools maintain a strong emphasis on character development. Through daily prayers, ethical discussions, and acts of service, students cultivate discipline, patience, and compassion. Modesty is encouraged, and school environment fosters a deep sense of respect for teachers, parents, and peers. Perhaps most uniquely, these institutions create a community where faith is celebrated, not just practiced. Whether in a madrassa in Pakistan or an Islamic academy in Canada, these schools provide a holistic approach to education that nurtures both the mind and the soul.

Salam Institute for Peace and Justice

Salam Institute for Peace and Justice works with Quranic schools to promote education for peace through training programs aimed at building the capacity of teachers and students in critical thinking, interfaith dialogue, and conflict resolution. Through partnerships with universities and research organizations, the Institute has contributed to developing educational methods that help instill values of tolerance and pluralism.

Between 2016 and 2018, Salam Institute partnered with Arab Barometer and Northwestern University on a special project aimed at promoting research and education for critical thinking in Lebanon, Jordan, and the West Bank. From 2008 to 2020, Salam Institute also carried out various projects in Chad that focused on building the capacity of Muslim and non-Muslim religious leaders, particularly within Quranic schools and civil society. These trainings emphasized peace

education, interfaith dialogue, conflict resolution skills, and reconciliation.

In addition, Salam Institute collaborated with the International Center for Religion and Diplomacy (ICRD), through a USAID West Africa office grant, to conduct research and build the capacity of teachers and students in Quranic schools in Chad and Cameroon, enhancing their skills in conflict resolution and peaceful communication.

More recently, between 2021 and 2022, Salam Institute implemented a project in Pakistan and Iraq to offer secondary trauma support to religious freedom defenders, including civil society organizations, religious and community leaders, and members of the Freedom House (FH) referral network who work directly with victims of religious persecution.

Methods and Initiatives

Salam Institute relies on a mix of formal and informal methods to implement its educational programs. Formal methods include integrating concepts of education for peace into Quranic school curricula and organizing training workshops for religious leaders and teachers on religious pluralism and tolerance. Informal methods include community dialogue sessions and collaborative initiatives with civil society to promote a culture of peace among students and teachers.

Through the work in Pakistan and Iraq between 2021 and 2022, Salam Institute supported defenders of religious freedom working with victims of religious persecution, helping to enhance their psychological and social



Photo credit: Salam Institute for Peace and Justice

resilience. The focus was also on providing safe spaces for dialogue within schools and local communities, which helped reduce tensions between different religious groups.

These initiatives have had a positive impact on students, teachers, and communities. For students, the programs increased their awareness of the importance of religious pluralism and tolerance, enabling them to discuss sensitive issues constructively. Teachers gained new teaching skills and became better equipped to present religious curricula in ways that promote peaceful values. At the community level, these efforts helped reduce religious tensions and fostered cooperation between religious leaders and civil society.

In Chad and Cameroon, Salam Institute observed a gradual shift in community attitudes towards education for peace, with

Quranic schools becoming more open to integrating conflict resolution concepts into their curricula. Schools also became centers for community dialogue, where students and teachers interacted with religious and community leaders from different backgrounds to promote peaceful coexistence.

With the trust gained from the community, Salam Institute was able to change prevailing opinions regarding girls' education, advocating for the right to education for all children and creating more space for girls in schools and their communities.

Partnerships and Their Role in Supporting Education for Peace

The success of Salam Institute's programs relies on strategic partnerships with religious leaders, teachers, and local and international organizations. Collaboration with ICRD and USAID helped develop excellent training programs for Quranic schools in West Africa, enhancing their ability to address conflicts peacefully. Cooperation with the Arab Barometer and Northwestern University also served as an important model for integrating academic research into the development of critical thinking curricula in religious schools.

Additionally, Salam Institute strengthens its partnerships with local civil society organizations to ensure the sustainability of its programs, training local staff to follow up on project implementation. Religious leaders are also involved in designing educational programs, which increases their legitimacy within local communities and ensures the effectiveness of the programs even after Salam Institute's project ends.

Challenges

These initiatives face several challenges, most notably community resistance to certain ideas related to religious pluralism, especially in areas experiencing sectarian tensions. Moreover, the lack of resources and funding poses a barrier to expanding the scope of the programs. To overcome these challenges, Salam Institute relies on a gradual approach, starting with building trust with targeted communities and working from within through their religious leaders.

The integration of modern educational methods is a major challenge faced by Quranic schools, as they often rely exclusively on rote learning and memorization. This traditional approach limits both students and teachers from engaging with contemporary teaching techniques, leaving graduates and educators ill-equipped to adapt to modern educational frameworks. Most Quranic schools focus almost entirely on memorizing the Qur'an with little to no room for other subjects like Arabic, French, Mathematics, or other Islamic theological and legal disciplines. This narrow focus significantly impedes the development of well-rounded students, hindering their overall educational growth.

Additionally, many Quranic school teachers lack the necessary skills to employ diverse teaching methods. As a result, they often resort to corporal punishment as a disciplinary tool, with the threat of punishment serving as the primary motivator for students. This not only stifles student engagement but also fosters a culture of fear rather than one of constructive learning. There is also a lack of investment in expanding the educational dimensions and

values within the curriculum of Quranic schools. Furthermore, the absence of a unified curriculum outlining the skills and competencies that students should acquire during their studies exacerbates the disorganization and lack of clear direction in these institutions.

The physical conditions in many Quranic schools are substandard, with inadequate sanitation, poor ventilation, and unsuitable classroom spaces that negatively impact the learning environment. Basic infrastructural improvements, such as the addition of mats, roof coverings, and water points, could greatly enhance the conditions for learning.

The lack of economic opportunities for Quranic school graduates further complicates their future prospects. Many students and graduates face limited job opportunities, as their education does not prepare them for formal employment.

Moreover, there is a significant gap between Quranic schooling and formal education systems, with few pathways to bridge the two. This makes it difficult for students to transition from traditional religious education to formal schooling, impeding their social mobility and future prospects. The lack of professional development opportunities for Quranic school teachers, many of whom are economically vulnerable and rely on low stipends or volunteerism, further exacerbates these issues. Additionally, the lack of governmental support and interest in developing Quranic schools leaves these institutions struggling with outdated methods and limited resources.

Finally, the competition between formal

schooling and Quranic education disrupts students' educational progression. The lack of systematic and comprehensive assessment methods, aside from the evaluation of memorization, leaves little opportunity for students to demonstrate their broader learning and competencies. These challenges reflect the broader issues faced by Quranic schools in adapting to modern educational standards and ensuring the future success of their students.

Strategies to Overcome the Challenges

To overcome the challenges faced by Quranic schools, several strategies have been implemented to improve education quality and student outcomes. Modern educational methods, including critical thinking and interactive learning, have been integrated into the curriculum, complementing traditional memorization practices. Teacher training programs help educators adopt these methods and move away from using corporal punishment, instead fostering constructive, nonviolent disciplinary approaches.

The curriculum has been expanded to include subjects such as Arabic, French, Mathematics, and Islamic theology, providing students with a well-rounded education. A unified curriculum has also been developed to ensure students acquire essential skills and competencies, aligning with both religious and academic standards.

Teacher training and professional development have been prioritized to help educators use motivating, nonviolent methods and enhance student engagement. Additionally, investments in physical infrastructure, including sanitation, ventilation, and basic facilities like mats and

water points, have improved the learning environment in many schools.

Efforts to bridge the gap between Quranic and formal education systems have led to the creation of flexible curricula that allow students to transition between the two, enhancing educational opportunities. Economic vulnerabilities for teachers have been addressed through initiatives providing more stable incomes and professional development.

Collaboration with local governments and NGOs has helped secure funding and advocacy for Quranic schools, ensuring greater support and recognition. Furthermore, new assessment methods have been introduced to evaluate students holistically, focusing on critical thinking and problem-solving, rather than solely on memorization.

Additionally, there is a focus on involving women and youth, as experience has shown that they play a key role in spreading a culture

of dialogue and tolerance.


Conclusion

Through these efforts, Quranic schools prove to be not just religious institutions but powerful platforms for spreading peace and promoting education based on tolerance and pluralism.

Support for Quranic schools is vital because they offer not only academic learning but also foster community identity and moral development. They can become powerful platforms for spreading peace, promoting tolerance, and encouraging pluralism. By investing in these institutions—improving teacher training, curriculum development, and infrastructure—and fostering partnerships, Quranic schools can provide a more comprehensive education that benefits students academically, socially, and spiritually. Supporting these schools is crucial for shaping future generations that are equipped to navigate the complexities of both their faith and the modern world.



Photo credit: Salam Institute for Peace and Justice



...A LONGING
FOR EDUCATION
THAT FUELS
THEIR HOPE FOR
A BRIGHTER
FUTURE



Emerging Voices:

YOUNG AFGHAN ARTISTS FOR PEACE

Introduced by Rukhsar

These artists are a group of gifted young women from Afghanistan, each filled with creativity and ambition. Despite facing significant obstacles that prevent them from pursuing formal education, they actively work towards building a better future for themselves and their communities. Engaged in peacebuilding initiatives, these artists dedicate their efforts to support others while seeking opportunities for self-education. Their determination and resilience shines through as they use art as a powerful medium to express their hopes and dreams.

The artwork created by Shabnam, Zainab, Sana, and Mursal embodies their unique experiences and shared aspirations. Each piece reflects their strength and creativity, portraying vivid imagery that speaks to their struggles and desire for peace

and education. Through their art, they convey a common dream: a longing for education that fuels their hope for a brighter future. Each exhibit serves as a powerful reminder that education is not just a personal pursuit, but a vital pathway to empowerment and change. Their creations depict not only their individual journeys, but also the collective voice of countless Afghan girls yearning for the opportunity to learn. In every brushstroke, they express their determination to overcome barriers and their belief that, with education, they can transform their lives and communities. Their art inspires others to recognize the importance of education and the transformative power of creativity in overcoming adversity, making each piece a beacon of hope and resilience.

Mursal

01

Look closer.
This isn't calm. It's deliberate strength.
Each hand knows exactly what it's holding—history, weight, and violence.
And still, they choose to hold.
Not for power, but for each other.
Not to win, but to heal.
To remember that before the borders,
before the flags, before the wounds—we
were human.
We still are.

"When the power of love overcomes the
love of power, the world will know
peace." — Jimi Hendrix



Shabnam

02

She stands in flames—not to burn,
but to be remembered.
This artwork is inspired by girls like
Abida, who was taken from this
world too soon. It's for every Afghan
girl whose life was set on fire by
injustice. Her eyes are filled with
questions no one dared to answer—
but her presence in the flames is a
symbol of resistance. She is not gone.
She is the fire.



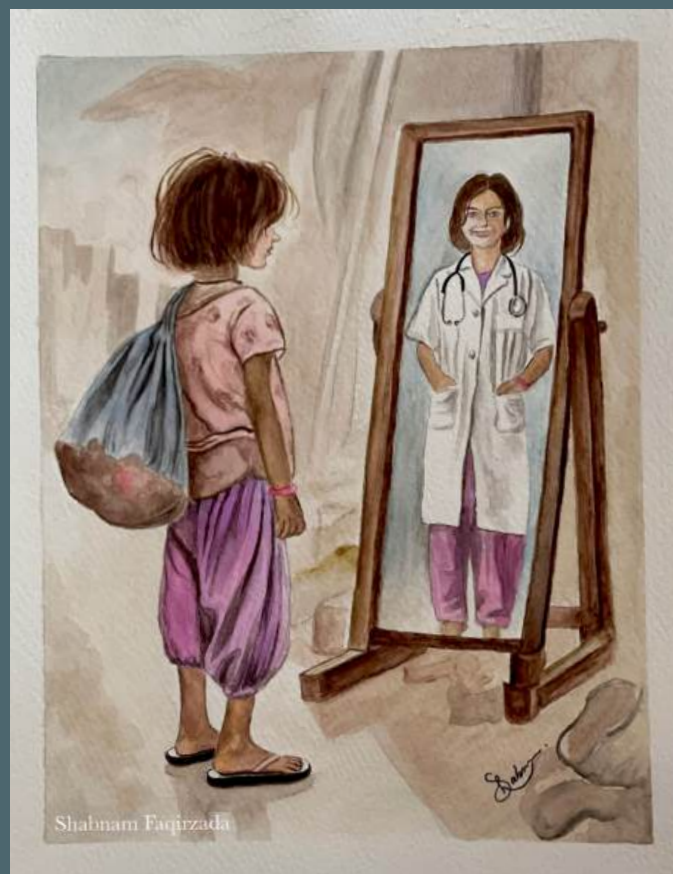
Shabnam Faqirzada

Shabnam

03

A girl with nothing but a dream on her shoulders.

This child stands in front of a mirror, not to see who she is—but who she can be. Despite the torn clothes and the heavy bag of survival, her eyes see hope. Her reflection wears a white coat, a badge of healing, and dignity. This is not just a drawing—it's a declaration: Dreams have no borders, and no one can steal the future from a girl who believes.



Shabnam

04

Even with blood on her face, she dares to rise.

This is the voice of Afghan girls, who have been denied education for several years —stripped of their basic rights, yet never stripped of their courage. Her wounds are real, but so is her strength. The red of her palm is a scream for justice. She holds a book like a torch in the dark, and though she's been silenced, her story shouts through every line. She is not broken—she is unshakable. She is not alone—she is every girl still dreaming under closed school doors.



Zainab

05

Peace and calm mean the paths of life are open. People try to live, but with peace, they can work for both today and the future. When there is peace, even dry bread can feel like a delicious meal. With peace, everything grows, and life becomes more beautiful.



Sana

06

She is not just a painting...she is thousands of voices. This girl represents countless women standing between dreams and reality. On one side, there are hopes; on the other, restrictions.

Her image speaks beyond appearances—the pain in her eyes, the black flower blooming in her heart, the silent screams, and the courage flowing through her quietness.

She is more than a painting; she is a statement—a testament for all girls living dual lives: the one they are expected to live, and the one they wish to live



On the right side:

A dark, cold sky.
A girl, eyes filled with fear, forced to wear a veil
even as a child.
She must not be herself,
must be a housewife,
caring for children and home, and nothing more.

The black flower on her dress,
above the faded red flowers,
right over her heart—
as if her own heart has turned black.

She is not herself.
Even if she wants to be, she can't.
She must keep going,
stay silent,
even if pain pours from her eyes...

On the left side:

A blue sky—
symbolizing peace, freedom, calm, and hope.

Below, a girl as strong as a mountain,

as steady as an oak,
as powerful as a silent storm,
brave and proud,
with the boldness of light in darkness.

Her eyes shine with passion and excitement,
looking at the dreams she has achieved.

She wears a graduation cap and gown,
because she is now an educated woman.

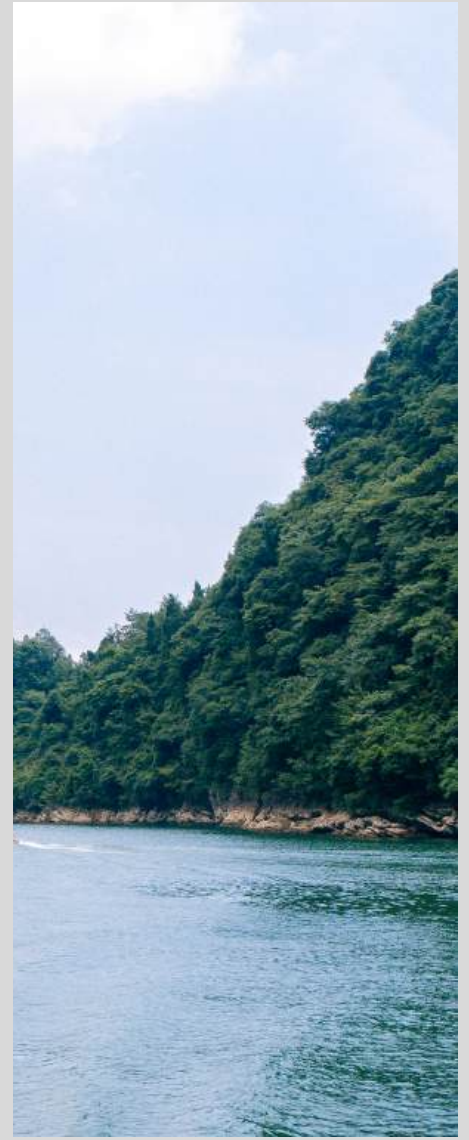
Today, she has shown herself,
proven that being a girl means being capable;
that her choices belong to her.

The artist

My painting is finished...
When I looked at it,
I saw she wasn't another girl...
She was me.
I found myself in her.
She was truly me.

In every line,
a piece of my soul remains;
my feelings, my tears, my beliefs...

She isn't just me,
she is you too.
She tells the story of thousands of young girls in
my country.
She is you...
If you place yourself in her shoes for a moment,
you will feel it...
you will understand the pain.



PATHS & PEACE

Written by Julie Lillie

There are infinite paths for seeking and being in peace. Change, transformation, and evolution happen in form and formlessness. Education has the power to realize the vision of living in just, positive peace globally. The perspectives and voices of children and youth must be raised and centered in this process.

As you journey into a bit of my path to peace, I invite you to reflect on the relationship of pain, presence, and peace in your life, community, nation, and throughout the world. As you reflect, can you still hear the voice of your child-self within?

Heart of an Educator

My path within peace and justice education emerged in childhood. It started with being in loving conversation with the natural world around my rural Wisconsin home. As my cats and stuffed animals could attest from their many lessons, in my heart I have always been an educator. In elementary school, I responded to playground needs by setting up a system of peace circles for friendship and conflict resolution that continued for years. In middle school, I noticed an inequality and upon learning about Title IX, advocated and succeeded in forming a girls school soccer team. In high school, I developed community service projects like reading buddies with younger kids. A social studies teacher engaged us in critical consciousness and justice-centered inquiry far beyond the White-centering textbook, which became a core part of my teaching and learning practice. As I began college, I was questioning the role of schooling and knew I wanted to become an educator who cared for and prioritized the development and needs of the whole child while co-creating spaces of belonging, healing and joy.

Throughout my career, I have had many roles (teacher, coach, leader, coordinator), which helped me develop a micro and macro view of our preK-12 public school systems. It has been an honor to witness the genuine care of children and youth demonstrated by so many. My teaching style has been inspired by guides who facilitate the child's self-directed learning journey, know when to withdraw or hold space for children's genius and their empowered choice and voice to rise. One such peacemaker I was honored to (un)learn with was Leech



Lake Anishinaabe Elder, Ida Downwind-Bald Eagle. Ida opened, expanded, and immersed me in Indigenous ways of knowing and being - both in education and within my personal growth and healing. Her mentorship helped shape much of my approach to peace education.

When George Floyd was murdered in 2020, I was a teacher and literacy coach near the Minneapolis site. Though my colleagues, students, and I had already been engaging in anti-bias and anti-racism (un)learning, I felt even more urgency to expand and deepen this work. I had led teams in redesigning our literacy curriculum to be more culturally relevant and inclusive of people of the global majority, but inequities were often upheld in the White-centering hidden curriculum that continued patterns of injustice, social oppression and racial stereotyping. For years, I had been coaching and

leading professional learning about trauma informed care, yet I continued to observe adults disregard the foundational regulatory needs of children (and themselves) because of the long list of rote academic benchmarks and test results that were the top priorities. Despite my colleagues and I doing our best to deliver engaging and impactful academic lessons and activities, there were far too many children with unmet needs, as well as anxiety, depression and/or apathy about schooling.

I was feeling pulled to make a change in my educator role and impact, but there was a voice I hadn't allowed myself to deeply listen to - and it was demanding to be heard. My body, who I now see as one of my greatest teachers, urged me to create space for an internal transformation.

Change: Pain Into Presence

Throughout my life, I put value on doing—getting things going and done—and physical activeness. Intermittently, I was forced to slow down to navigate injuries, surgeries, treatments, poor healing, and other health challenges. Bodily dysfunction, disease, and pain became a 'normal' part of my experience. By 30, I was diagnosed with a connective tissue disorder. I was increasingly in survival mode due to the breakdown of my body. Work and daily living tasks like bathing, dressing, driving, cooking, and cleaning had become increasingly challenging, unsafe, and painful. I felt so much joy being with children, but the physical demands left me collapsing in exhaustion and tears of pain. Anchored to my educator passion, and with the help of body braces, tape, internalized ableism, and stubborn determination, I pushed through the pain as

long as I could. However, the surgeries, diagnoses, treatments, medical leaves, accommodations, and schedule reductions stacked up and there was a real possibility of having to stop teaching and applying for disability. As the world and my community navigated the Covid-19 pandemic, I felt my identity, independence, and vitality slipping away. And yet, I also held hope that my health could stabilize; that healing was possible.

An overarching theme emerged... **I had to learn to BE, not just to DO.** I needed to learn to slow down, listen, and lovingly surrender. To be at peace even in the presence of pain.

My mom always told me, *"this too shall pass."* For a long time, I thought she was referring to how that current injury and pain would eventually pass, but now I understand that everything is in a state of change.



Julie Lillie and Ida Downwind-Bald Eagle

Change itself is the only constant! Energy keeps transforming, mimicking the flow of our stories and the cycles of our natural world. With care from my family and friends, interventions of a wizard-like care team and a huge investment into cutting edge regenerative medicine, gratefully my nervous and musco-skeletal system began to transform! My body and I continue our journey of being, listening, managing, stabilizing, healing, strengthening... of changing.

My body has been a powerful messenger and teacher. For this I am (now) eternally grateful. I realized that I did not need to suffer and could pause and find peace and joy in the simplest of moments. For example, a wave of appreciation for being able to move my body to give and receive a hug. I hold an awe-filled smile for the automaticity of the breath and how it anchors me to the present moment. Even in the most challenging of times, presence and gratitude can shift us from despair.

As I entered the next phase of healing, I returned to my wonderings about how I could best serve children, educators and our communities. I now had an embodied understanding that nourishing and balancing the needs of the body, mind, emotions and spirit was foundational. I understood that education, too, must shift to emphasize the art of living, of humans being - not just humans doing!

Clarity in Purpose

After 16 years in diverse preK-12 urban school settings, it was painful to see how our systems failed to meet the needs of far too many children.

This happens through the many injustices that exist and are ignored, perpetuated or upheld, as well by putting the social, emotional, and mental health needs of the children secondary to academic performance. I enjoyed the school-site roles and their positive ripples, and yet I knew I wanted to help reimagine and evolve schools to prioritize student voice and choice, global citizenship, human and nature rights, social justice, critical consciousness, nonviolence, and whole child / holistic social emotional learning. I believe the primary roles of education ought to be to empower learners; to celebrate diversity; foster environmental stewardship; enhance overall well-being; enable personal and collective growth; hold space for wonder, critical thinking and problem solving; and to ultimately disrupt oppression and break the cycles of poverty, trauma, violence, and war. As I deepened my practice of 'being', I was able to distinguish and trust the voices within. I received clarity about my life's purpose: to help mainstream peace and justice education.

Five Peace Actions

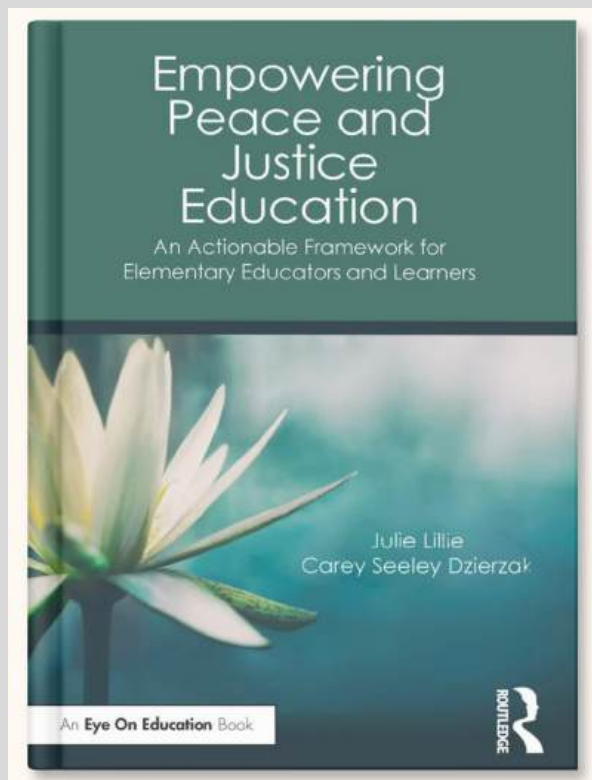
As I considered how to help advance peace education, I shifted to consulting to allow more flexible space for my continued healing and strengthening. In beautiful synchronicity, a former colleague, Carey Seeley Dzierzak, reached out for leadership coaching. Carey was leading her school in becoming an International Peace Site and introduced me to the empowering Five Peace Actions. The peace actions spoke so powerfully, succinctly, universally, and personally to my journey and educational values. I fell in love with them, became a Peace Ambassador, and have since centered the Five Peace Actions in my life and work.

The Five Peace Actions are:

- Seek Peace Within Yourself and Others
- Respect Diversity
- Protect Our Environment
- Reach Out In Service
- Be A Responsible Citizen Of The World

The Five Peace Actions were created by World Citizen Peace, who empower us to create a just and peaceful world. Please consider supporting World Citizen Peace by becoming a Peace Ambassador, as an International Peace Site, or committing to living in alignment with these peace actions.

As my vision for advancing peace education strengthened, Carey and I realized we were meant to fill an essential gap in peace and justice education: a guide for elementary educators and learners. As Toni Morrison spoke, “If you find a book you really want to read but it hasn’t been written yet, then you must write it” (1981). So we did!



Our resulting professional and conversational guidebook, ***Empowering Peace and Justice Education: An Actionable Framework for Elementary Educators and Learners***, unsurprisingly centers around the Five Peace Actions! The book features research, philosophy, our stories, along with global ‘Peacemakers in Practice’ and over 100 ‘Put It Into Practice’ lessons to embed peace education into one’s life, classroom and school culture. Drawing on our combined 40+ years of experience in education, we emphasize literacy integration, culturally relevant pedagogy, trauma informed care and co-creating brave, democratic spaces for a more just and peaceful world.

Comprehensive peace education, like what we outline in ***Empowering Peace and Justice Education***, shares connection with many approaches such as international and comparative education, social justice education, social emotional learning, human rights education, education for sustainability, climate justice, restorative practices, decolonization and more. This is peacelearning. Peacelearning (yes, no space there!) is a powerful word that demonstrates the compound and interconnected nature of learning and peace. Pursuits of peace cannot be separated from learning.

I am also founder of The Peace Pad, a consultancy dedicated to sharing the Five Peace Actions and advancing peace and justice education within learning environments, organizations, businesses and communities. Peace education is for everyone - at all ages and stages of life. On my site, you can access many free resources to support us all on our journey of seeking peace. I believe education has the power to realize the vision of living in just, positive peace globally. I am dedicated to co-leading a movement that results in peace and justice

education being prioritized for and with all of our children within our preK-12 educational systems, policies, schools, leaders, teachers, families, and communities.

“Peace education is both a philosophy and a process of learning and being that creates a world in which all people live in harmony with oneself, each other and the environment.”

~ Julie Lillie & Carey Seeley Dzierzak (2025)

Take Peace Action

I am an advocate for a deep and transformational peacelearning process. I also understand this is not a small undertaking. A change in the human consciousness and society will take more than my book and efforts - it will take all of us! However, I believe this transformation is already in motion within the larger space-time continuum. Every individual impacts the collective, and the collective impacts the individual. I call on educators, leaders, parents, community members and children to be aware of and engage in their evolutionary role of creating a world in which all people, beings and organisms have their basic needs and rights met and live in harmony with others and planet Earth.

Co-creating just cultures of peace also requires a disruption of the status quo and the many ‘isms that uphold oppression and perpetuate violence. All forms of oppression, marginalization, racism, sexism, classism, ableism, ageism, heterosexism, antisemitism, micro-aggressions, bias, prejudices, stereotyping, and discrimination can and should be explored in developmentally sensitive ways in our school communities. As leading advocate for critical pedagogy Paulo Freire stated *“All education is political; teaching is never a neutral act.”*

We all must take a stand and prioritize co-creating brave spaces that honor all identities and allow for developmentally sensitive conversations about harm, pain, structural violence, systematic oppression, and the exploration of peaceful alternatives and solutions. Our students' voices and experiences are integral to this work. Peacelearners need democratically co-created brave spaces for exploring ideas and solutions, to give feedback and to share their hopes and dreams in creating a world of both justice and peace for all. How will you clear, hold, and co-create space to raise up the voices of all children?

Prioritizing and balancing being and doing may be our most important action (and nonaction) within this peace and justice educational movement. In seeking peace, we must listen deeply to the pain, suffering, love, and joy within ourselves and others. The insights mirrored in relationship with ourselves, others, and our natural world deepen resilience and anchor understanding. Could it be that through pain, our most trusting inner voice illuminates the path and peace is ultimately realized?



“Pursuits of peace cannot be separated from learning.”



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“I believe primary roles of education ought to be to empower learners, to celebrate diversity, foster environmental stewardship, enhance overall well-being, enable personal and collective growth, hold space for wonder, critical thinking and problem solving and to ultimately disrupt oppression and break the cycles of poverty, trauma, violence and war.”



PEPNET'S FOOTPRINT IN NIGERIA:

Building A Generation of Peacebuilders

Written by Moses ABOLADE

In 2017, while teaching Civic Education in a secondary school in Lagos State, Nigeria, Moses ABOLADE encountered a deeply familiar problem: his students were increasingly violent, restless, and reactive. It was a painful déjà vu. Moses himself had grown up in Ore, Ondo State, where he attended Community High School, then known as one of the most volatile schools in the region. The school had a reputation not only for rampant bullying but also for fatal clashes that frequently drew police intervention.

Despite his best efforts as a teacher, including the use of corporal punishment, Moses saw no real change. The methods he had inherited weren't working. Desperate for answers, he combed through civic education textbooks but found no solutions. That search led him to a conversation with a friend who introduced him to the Institute for Peace and Strategic Studies at the University of Ibadan. Intrigued by the idea of teaching peace as a discipline, Moses enrolled in a Master's program in Peace and Conflict Studies in 2018.

What he found there transformed his life.

While studying, Moses began asking deeper questions: Why wasn't peace education taught at the undergraduate level, especially in a country with such a young and impressionable population? Why wasn't peace and conflict education embedded in the fabric of our school curricula? These questions ignited his passion, and soon he began selling peace-related books to fund his learning and deepen his knowledge. One book, in particular, *Peace Education: Pathway to a Culture of Peace*, gifted to him by a mentor, became the spark that inspired him to teach peace to anyone who would listen.

At the University of Ibadan, his leadership skills, passion for knowledge-sharing, and bold curiosity earned him the position of President of the Institute for Peace and Strategic Studies Students' Association. From this platform, Moses began experimenting, organizing peace workshops, seminars, peace walks, peace weeks, campaigns, and conferences. These experiences not only sharpened his skills but also exposed him to the gaps in Nigeria's peace education landscape.

One day in class, he posed a profound question: Will the victims, villains, and voices of violence in Nigeria ever have the luxury to study peace at the Master's level? The answer was clear: unlikely. He then proposed a bold solution: if people couldn't access peace education, then peace education must go to the people. And so, the vision for the Peace Education and Practice Network (PEPNET) was born.

In November 2018, PEPNET was inaugurated at the University of Ibadan with about five passionate peace students. Its mission was simple but revolutionary: to creatively teach peace for development, using innovative platforms such as media, training, and community engagement.



Photo credit: PEPNET

PEPNET Peace Education Model

PEPNET employs a holistic and multi-layered peace education model that combines content creation, capacity building, program management, and media engagement. Their approach blends formal, non-formal, and informal education with strategic media use, including radio, television, and digital platforms, to broaden access to peace information and reach diverse audiences rapidly and at scale. This participatory model prioritizes context-based learning, emotional intelligence, and conflict-sensitive engagement.

PEPNET's work is guided by two key theoretical foundations: Human Security and Conflict Sensitivity. These frameworks ensure that interventions are people-centered, inclusive, and responsive to the root causes of conflict, addressing not just immediate violence but also structural and relational issues that threaten human dignity and peace.

PEPNET's theory of change is rooted in the belief that identifying individuals with needs and potential, equipping them with peacebuilding skills, and training gatekeepers and trainers creates a ripple effect of transformation. These empowered individuals go on to train others, strengthen local capacity, and drive sustainable change. Ultimately, they aim, through their engagements, to transform minds, empowering people not only to resolve conflict but to lead the development of peaceful and resilient communities.

PEPNET Programs and Impact

Since its inception, PEPNET has strategically implemented a range of impactful peacebuilding

initiatives, leveraging both traditional and digital media, in-person engagements, and community-based interventions to advance peace education across Nigeria and beyond.

In late 2018 and early 2019, PEPNET launched a series of peace awareness campaigns across Ibadan, Oyo State, utilizing radio and television platforms to disseminate peace messages in alignment with the observance of internationally recognized peace days as declared by the United Nations. These campaigns aired on popular stations such as JAMZ FM, BCOS and Impact Africa Television (IATV), among others.

The programs not only commemorated key peace-related observances but also served as an opportunity to educate the public on peacebuilding principles. Through these efforts, it is estimated that over 10,000 listeners and viewers were reached, significantly raising awareness of peace values among diverse audiences in southwestern Nigeria.

In early 2019, PEPNET expanded its outreach through school-based sensitization programs in secondary schools located in Agbowo and Bodija, communities proximate to the University of Ibadan. These initiatives enabled direct engagement with students and educators, helping the organization better understand the peace education needs of young people in school environments. The field experience gained through these school visits provided valuable insights into how young people perceive conflict and highlighted the necessity of tailored interventions.

One key lesson from this period was the importance of a holistic peacebuilding approach that integrates content creation, capacity-

building workshops, media engagement, and program management. This multi-dimensional strategy proved effective in reaching and influencing various categories of beneficiaries, including students, teachers, community members, and media consumers.

In October 2019, PEPNET held its first in-person peace education workshop at the University of Ibadan, which brought together peace lovers, young leaders, and community stakeholders. The event focused on peace education, conflict resolution, and interfaith dialogue as well as language and communication for peace engagements. It marked a significant milestone as PEPNET partnered with other organizations to amplify its impact. During the same period, PEPNET formally established the PEPNET Community, a growing network of peacebuilders, volunteers, and advocates who coordinate and support the organization's grassroots and digital peacebuilding efforts. This foundational work laid the groundwork for PEPNET's eventual formal registration as a non-governmental organization.

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, PEPNET swiftly transitioned to digital platforms, launching a series of virtual E-Peace Summits. These online summits covered a range of themes including peace education, human security, media and conflict, and nonviolence. Among these events, the "War Stories" Summit stood out as a landmark session, drawing global attention and attracting speakers and participants from several countries. The virtual format enabled the organization to transcend geographical boundaries and engage a broader international audience.

This period also saw the formal introduction of the PEPNET Peace Meal, a weekly virtual peace education session hosted on WhatsApp. Launched during the pandemic, the Peace Meal has since evolved into a vital platform for consistent dialogue, learning, and community building. Held every Sunday, it brings together peacebuilders from across the globe to reflect on diverse peace-related themes. The Peace Meal has hosted over 150 sessions and engaged more than 350 unique participants from Nigeria, Africa, and beyond.

Expansion and Strategic Impact: PEPNET Activities

In 2021, the Peace Education and Practice Network (PEPNET) deepened its grassroots impact by returning to Ore, Ondo State, the hometown of its Executive Director, Moses ABOLADE, with a clear commitment to address the community's long-standing issues of youth violence, school-based bullying, and inter-group tension. This initiative gave rise to the Ore Community Peace and Development Programme (OCPDP), a two-day flagship intervention designed to foster sustainable peace, empower students, and promote inclusive dialogue among stakeholders.

On the first day of the OCPDP, PEPNET hosted a comprehensive peace education workshop attended by approximately 100 students from secondary schools in the Ore axis. The sessions covered key topics such as peace education, conflict management, anti-bullying strategies, and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGS). The workshop was followed by an engaging inter-school debate competition, where participating schools received both cash prizes and educational

materials, aimed at reinforcing a culture of dialogue, critical thinking, and peaceful engagement.

The second day of the program shifted focus to the broader community. Over 80 traditional, religious, and community leaders convened for a community peacebuilding dialogue, where issues of local insecurity, social tensions, and youth involvement in violence were discussed in an open forum. These conversations led to several on-the-spot mediation efforts between conflicting parties, showcasing the immediate practical impact of the initiative. To ensure sustainability, a local ad hoc coordinating team, composed of community teachers and volunteers, was established to work alongside PEPNET in addressing ongoing social challenges. This initiative remains one of PEPNET’s most impactful grassroots interventions to date, with its influence still visible through community-led peace initiatives.



Photo credit: PEPNET

In 2022, PEPNET made a strategic decision to relocate its operational base to Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory. This move was driven by the relocation of several key members and

the organization’s ambition to be more strategically positioned for collaboration with national and international partners.

That same year, PEPNET organized its first Global Peace Walk, held simultaneously in Lagos, Ibadan, and Abuja under the theme “End Discrimination: Build Peace”. The event drew participants from diverse backgrounds and raised awareness about the harmful impacts of discrimination in society. It also marked PEPNET’s emergence as a nationwide peace advocacy movement with the capacity for multi-city coordination.



Photo credit: PEPNET

In November 2022, PEPNET gained international recognition through its engagement with the African Union (AU). Executive Director Moses ABOLADE was invited to represent Nigerian civil society organizations at a high-level stakeholder meeting in Nairobi, Kenya. This opened the door for further international opportunities, particularly in the areas of public speaking and diplomatic advocacy. As a result, Moses ABOLADE has since served as a moderator and speaker at several high-profile forums, including events hosted by United Nations

agencies in Nigeria, thereby solidifying his position and PEPNET's influence within global peacebuilding networks.

From December 5th to 7th, 2022, PEPNET organized the Peace Education and Management Training (PEMAT), a hybrid capacity-building workshop designed to equip emerging peacebuilders with practical skills in peace education, conflict transformation, and program management. The training offered a unique blend of virtual and onsite participation, allowing for broader inclusion and accessibility.

Since 2022, PEPNET has institutionalized its Annual End-of-Year Peace Picnic, held every December, as a platform for community bonding and informal engagement. These gatherings combine recreational activities, such as games, music, and art, with reflective discussions on peacebuilding, providing a relaxed yet meaningful space for members to connect, rejuvenate, and celebrate their shared commitment to peace.

In 2023, PEPNET broadened its reach through the launch of a six-month television program titled "Peace Zone", aired on KAFTAN TV. The program initially aimed to provide weekly public education on peace and conflict resolution, but soon evolved into an interview-based format. Each episode featured prominent peacebuilders, researchers, and practitioners from across Nigeria, discussing emerging conflict dynamics, particularly in Northern Nigeria, and offering strategic insights into conflict prevention and community resilience. With an estimated 500,000 live viewers reached, *Peace Zone* significantly boosted public awareness and reinforced PEPNET's media-driven peace education model.

Today, PEPNET has grown into a dynamic force in Nigeria's peacebuilding ecosystem, implementing over 30 strategic programs, directly impacting more than 4,500 individuals, and reaching over half a million people through its ever-expanding peace media presence. From humble beginnings in the classroom to global platforms, Moses ABOLADE and PEPNET continue to build a world shaped by peaceful individuals and resilient communities through creative and innovative means.

Peace Lovers Connect (PLC): Bridging Communities through Dialogue

At the heart of PEPNET's engagement strategy lies Peace Lovers Connect (PLC), a flagship initiative designed to inspire grassroots peacebuilding through dialogue and multimedia. The inaugural edition, launched in November 2024, screened *A Girl from Mogadishu* as part of the global 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence.

This emotionally powerful film catalysed rich intergenerational dialogue on gender-based violence, women's rights, and collective healing. Following the screening, participants engaged in safe, reflective discussions that fostered empathy and community solidarity. The event also featured a panel of experts in peacebuilding, human rights, and gender studies, who shared actionable strategies to address violence and build inclusive societies.

In 2025, PLC will host two more editions: one on September 21 to coincide with the International Day of Peace (within the Peace Education and Practice Conference – PEPCON), and another on December 14, marking International Human Rights Day. These strategically aligned dates will

enhance public engagement and policy influence, helping to position peace education within broader conversations on justice and development.

Back to School for Peace: Reclaiming Education for Marginalized Youth

To combat rising numbers of out-of-school children in underserved areas, PEPNET launched the Back to School for Peace Project at Junior Secondary School, Mpape (Abuja). This initiative reconnects vulnerable children with formal education as a pathway to personal and communal peace. Beyond access, the project promotes dignity, inclusion, and opportunity, transforming education into a frontline strategy for peacebuilding and national cohesion.

PESS: Institutionalizing Peace in Secondary Schools

The Peace Education for Secondary Schools (PESS) program is PEPNET's flagship curriculum-based intervention that embeds peace and conflict education in secondary schools. Launched in June 2024 at Newton National Secondary School, Mpape, the program integrates peace principles into academic structures through the PESS Manual and Handbook. These tools cover topics such as conflict resolution, human security, civic responsibility, and nonviolence.

To ensure effective implementation, PEPNET trained 25 volunteer teachers in 2024 through two intensive sessions, providing them with learner-centred teaching methods and classroom strategies. For 2025, the organisation is partnering with Nigeria's Secondary Education Board (SEB) and the Federal Ministry of Education to train an additional 88 teachers in

Abuja. This institutional collaboration is a major step toward mainstreaming peace education across the national curriculum.

PEMAT: Professionalizing Peacebuilding through Training

The Peace Education and Management Training (PEMAT) initiative equips peace educators, NGO leaders, and practitioners with technical and strategic competencies in areas like conflict analysis, project design, fundraising, sign language, and NGO management. Since its inception, PEMAT has trained over 200 peacebuilders, with its latest edition, PEMAT 2.0, held in November 2024, focusing on self-awareness in peace leadership.

In 2025, PEMAT 3.0 will evolve into a six-month intensive training, welcoming 40+ participants. The long-term vision is to institutionalize the program under the PEPNET Peace Education Academy, a formal, accredited hub for peace learning in Nigeria and West Africa. Discussions are ongoing with the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) and other regional partners for collaborative delivery and certification.

Strategic Collaborations for National Integration

Strategic alliances with key institutions bolster PEPNET's growing influence. Its partnership with SEB and the Federal Ministry of Education is paving the way for systemic adoption of peace education in schools. By aligning with national educational policies, PEPNET is creating scalable, replicable models for integrating peace education across Nigeria.



Photo credit: PEPNET

In addition, on April 10, 2025, PEPNET Executive Director, Amb. Moses ABOLADE, facilitated a capacity-building session for 50 secondary school teachers in Minna, Niger State, organized by the Abdulsalami Abubakar Institute for Peace and Sustainable Development Studies (AAIPSDS). The training focused on establishing peace clubs in schools and inspired new collaborative opportunities between PEPNET and AAIPSDS for subsequent phases of peace education and interstate programs.

A Holistic Vision for Peace

PEPNET's impact goes far beyond classroom interventions. Its work spans advocacy campaigns, digital content creation, multimedia

peace education, and applied research.

Whether through interactive workshops or policy advocacy, PEPNET continues to amplify community voices while nurturing a new generation of peace actors.

As PEPNET deepens its footprint in Nigeria and the wider region, its unwavering dedication to innovative, inclusive, and institutionalized peace education reaffirms its role as a continental thought leader and catalyst for sustainable peace. Through youth engagement, strategic partnerships, and transformative learning, PEPNET is not only responding to today's challenges but shaping a future rooted in peace, dignity, and shared humanity.

RESOURCES

Learn More

Learning for Peace: a toolkit for peace education in primary schools

When there is learning for peace in schools, children and young people better understand and communicate their emotions and needs, and they get along together better in class and the playground. They navigate the complex issues they face as they grow up and become more engaged in the world around them.

In the toolkit you will find:

- Peacemakers' four levels of peace and how they intersect.
- Games and activities, including how to introduce them into your setting.
- Ways to plan activities across a school curriculum.

Peacemakers is dedicated to sharing skills and strategies to grow peace in schools and communities. We have nearly 40 years' experience, working in hundreds of schools, equipping pupils and the adults who work with them with the skills, knowledge, and attitudes to build peace.



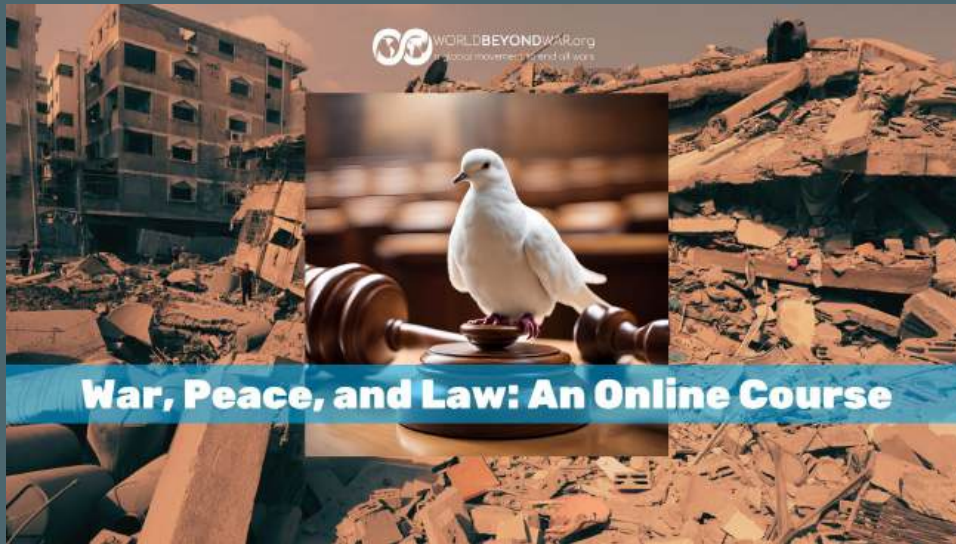
Peacemakers can help you bring peace education to your school. We offer established programmes, tailored advice and a wealth of resources, whatever stage of the journey you are at.

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PEACE PROSPECTS

Issue 03 | Fall 2025

Call For Proposals



Reimagining a New Generation of Peace

We invite contributors to join us in our next issue of *Peace Prospects* to explore what it means to lead and learn from peace during this profound global disruption. In a world shaped by weakening multilateralism, climate collapse, digital disruption, geopolitical tension, and deepening inequality, Issue 03 will focus on reimagining peace itself: how it is led, learned, and can be lived.

We aim to redefine peace leadership and peacebuilding, encompassing formal and informal spaces, intergenerational approaches, and diverse cultural and spiritual traditions. We strive to uplift the voices and practices of those challenging existing paradigms and offer bold, hopeful alternatives—from grassroots movements and faith communities to digital innovators, educators, and artists.

We welcome essays, research-based articles, interviews, visual stories, poetry, dialogues, case studies, multimedia, and other types of submissions. Whether you are an educator, activist, scholar, faith leader, student, artist, or storyteller—we want to hear from you.

Let's imagine—and build—a future where peace is not the status quo, but a radical and shared commitment to transformation.

How to Submit a Proposal

If you are interested in contributing to the upcoming issue, please send us a short description of your proposed contribution (300 word maximum) in the [proposal form](#).

Contact [Lisa Hilt](#) if you have any questions.

Proposal Form: <https://forms.gle/jYDX3VvVbdqTgapc9>

Proposal Deadline: 8 August 2025, 11:59 PM Eastern

Please review the [submission guidelines](#) to learn more about the theme of the upcoming issue, the types of contributions we are looking for, and how to share your proposal with us!

PEACE PROSPECTS

