Sangsaeng

Living Together Helping Each Other



Women Farmers in a Changing World: Learning to Live Together Through Everyday Lives

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EDITOR'S NOTE



As the 66th issue of *SangSaeng* goes to press, APCEIU marks an important milestone with the inauguration of its new director, Dr Jong-Hun Kim. In his inaugural address, Dr Kim underscored the vital role and transformative potential of Global Citizenship Education (GCED) in a rapidly changing world that appears increasingly distant from its core principles. His resolute call for solidarity and mutual understanding provides a timely lens through which this issue is presented.

We open with a Special Column by Professor Hyungryeol Kim, who makes a compelling case for a spirit of 'critical hope' to underpin a renewed vision of GCED capable of addressing geopolitical tensions, digital disruption and ecological crises. In particular, her emphasis on epistemic humility and critical engagement offers an essential analytical framework for the discussions that follow.

This issue's Focus section explores the lives and experiences of women farmers. Agriculture functions within a complex web of interdependence. Across the world, climate change, migration, conflict and technological change are reshaping food production, and women play an increasingly central role in sustaining food systems. However, we often overlook their vital contributions and perspectives. Examining the realities of women farmers provides a valuable lens through which we can understand our interconnected world and advance the aims of GCED.

To this end, we examine the theme of women farmers from three complementary perspectives. Mariola Acosta Frances and Huda Alsahi highlight a critical reality: though women stand at the heart of global agrifood systems, millions continue to face barriers that limit their opportunities and potential. Kae Mihara and Anna Pelkonen explore the structural challenges confronting women farmers across the Asia-Pacific region, arguing that addressing inequality in agrifood systems is essential not only for achieving gender equality but also for strengthening food security, climate resilience and sustainable development. Finally, Xinyi Niu, Junyu Huo and Yuchi Zhao showcase inspiring examples from Cambodia and China, where women have successfully harnessed technology and innovation to transform their agricultural practices and livelihoods. Together, these contributions offer a nuanced perspective that recognises the challenges women farmers face while affirming their agency, resilience and capacity to drive positive change.

In our Interview section, Professors Teruhisa Horio and Soon-Won Kang, two distinguished peace educators in East Asia, discuss peace education and solidarity in Asia, reminding us that peace and harmony cannot be achieved without sustained efforts to understand one another and learn how to live together.

The second half of the issue shifts from theory to practice. In Best Practices, we feature three programmes that use board games, chess and GCED methodologies to help participants navigate an increasingly interconnected world. This is followed by a personal reflection from an APCEIU Youth Network Core Member, who recounts her journey from climate observer to active leader.

Bringing our exploration to a close, Flamina Freitas Belo reflects on peace education in post-conflict Timor-Leste, inviting us to consider how societies can move forward when conflict has fractured human connections. Professor Adhamjon Ashirov then brings us full circle to the communal table through an exploration of the cultural heritage of pilaf in Uzbekistan. Finally, a participant in the 22nd EIU Photo Class shares reflections on balancing common ground and difference through the medium of photography.

We hope that Director Kim's vision, alongside the resilient stories featured in this issue, offers you both strength and inspiration as we continue our journey to promote learning to live together.

Thank you.

The *SangSaeng* Editorial Team

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SangSaeng [상생], a Korean word with Chinese roots, is composed of two characters: *Sang* [相], meaning "mutual"(each other) and *Saeng* [生], meaning "life." Put together, they mean "living together," "helping each other," which is our vision for the Asia-Pacific region. *SangSaeng* [相生] aims to be a forum for constructive discussion of issues, methods and experiences in the area of Education for International Understanding and Global Citizenship Education.

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Cover: A Woman Farmer Holds a Tablet Computer in a Rapeseed Field.
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GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION IN A FRAGMENTED WORLD: FROM GLOBAL OPTIMISM TO CRITICAL HOPE

Neither naïve optimism nor despair, critical hope anchors a renewed vision of GCED built for geopolitical tension, digital disruption and ecological crisis.

By **Hyungryeol Kim** (Professor, Department of Ethics Education, College of Education, Seoul National University)



△ Flags of UN member states outside the United Nations building in Geneva. Globalisation alone has proven insufficient to maintain lasting peace, mutual understanding or international cooperation.



△ Participants at the 2026 Asia-Pacific Training Workshop on GCED share reflections on human rights education across the region, 18 May 2026.

Global Citizenship Education (GCED) rose to international prominence during an era of expanding globalisation and growing optimism about international cooperation. As economic integration deepened, digital technologies drew societies closer together and global institutions assumed greater influence, education was increasingly expected to prepare young people not only as responsible national citizens but also as participants in an interconnected world.

Within this climate, UNESCO advanced GCED as an educational response to the opportunities and challenges of globalisation. Grounded in human rights, peace, sustainability and intercultural understanding, GCED sought to cultivate learners capable of addressing shared global challenges through dialogue, cooperation and collective responsibility.

Three decades on, however, the global landscape has become markedly more complex. Armed conflicts, geopolitical rivalry, democratic backsliding and growing distrust of multilateral institutions have reshaped international relations. At the same time, misinformation, digital fragmentation and political polarisation have eroded public trust both within and across societies. These developments prompt an important question: does GCED remain relevant in a world increasingly defined by geopolitical tension, democratic uncertainty and competing national interests?

Some interpret these trends as evidence that the vision of global citizenship has become unrealistic. Yet this conclusion rests on a mistaken assumption. The present moment does not reveal the failure of GCED; rather, it exposes the limitations of the earlier belief that globalisation alone would foster greater peace, mutual understanding and international cooperation.

Beyond Global Awareness: Why GCED Must Become More Critical

Much commentary today casts our era as signalling the end of globalisation. Yet globalisation has not vanished; its contradictions have simply become more visible. Wars reshape food security, migration and energy markets across continents, while climate change, artificial intelligence and pandemics continue to transcend national borders. Never has humanity been so deeply interconnected, yet rarely has it appeared so politically fragmented. This paradox fundamentally reshapes how we should understand GCED. Global citizenship is not about celebrating a borderless world but about recognising our profound interdependence, whether international relations are marked by cooperation or conflict.

This shifting reality also requires us to rethink GCED itself. The first generation of GCED broadened education beyond national citizenship by emphasising empathy, intercultural dialogue, diversity, sustainability and global awareness. Yet these alone are insufficient for addressing today's challenges.

The defining questions of our time concern not only diversity but also power: who defines peace? Whose voices are heard? Why do inequalities persist despite unprecedented global interconnectedness?



△ Protesters call for the impeachment of President Suk Yeol Yoon. Youth participation was an integral part of the 2024–25 demonstrations.

Such questions demand critical inquiry into the historical, political, economic and cultural structures that shape conflict and inequality.

My own research on GCED and the international monitoring of SDG Target 4.7 suggests that meaningful global citizenship extends beyond global awareness to encompass democratic values, critical thinking, civic efficacy and meaningful participation. Comparative studies of civic education likewise show that democratic citizenship is cultivated through democratic practice rather than civic knowledge alone.

The future of GCED therefore lies not merely in expanding global awareness but in fostering critical democratic citizenship. Alongside encouraging empathy for distant others, GCED should equip learners to understand the structural causes of injustice and to engage with disagreement through democratic dialogue rather than simplistic narratives.

Decolonising Global Citizenship: Learning from Multiple Worlds

If GCED is to remain relevant, it must confront a deeper challenge: whose knowledge shapes our understanding of global citizenship? For much of its history, debates on citizenship, democracy, development and even peace have been framed largely through Euro-American intellectual traditions. These traditions have made invaluable contributions to human rights, democratic governance and international cooperation. Yet they should not become the sole lens through which we imagine our shared future.

A growing body of scholarship in decolonial thought and critical global citizenship reminds us that many contemporary global inequalities cannot be understood apart from the colonial histories that continue to shape political institutions, economic structures and knowledge systems. GCED therefore cannot simply universalise one worldview; it must become a space where diverse historical experiences, cultural traditions and epistemological perspectives engage in genuine dialogue.

Kuan-Hsing Chen's notion of 'Asia as Method' illustrates this shift. Rather than asking how Asian societies might adopt Western models of citizenship, democracy or development, Chen invites us to view Asia as a source of intellectual resources capable of generating alternative understandings of modernity. This is not a rejection of universal values such as human dignity or justice but a recognition that there are multiple pathways to realising them.

Similarly, Vanessa Andreotti's 2006 work on critical GCED argues that global learning must move beyond empathy for distant others and towards questioning how privilege, power and historical inequalities shape our perspectives. Global citizenship thus becomes an ongoing ethical and intellectual practice of learning, unlearning and relearning.

The future of GCED therefore lies not in exporting universal answers but in cultivating epistemic humility – the willingness to acknowledge that no single society, culture or civilisation holds a monopoly on knowledge about democracy, justice or peaceful coexistence. In an increasingly fragmented world, learning to engage respectfully with multiple ways of knowing may become one of the most important civic competencies of the 21st century.

Democracy Begins at Home

Perhaps the most persistent misconception surrounding GCED is that it is chiefly concerned with 'global' issues. In reality, global citizenship begins with how individuals understand and participate in their own societies.

My research on civic education consistently shows that democratic citizenship is cultivated through experiencing democracy in everyday life. Students develop civic efficacy when they are encouraged to ask difficult questions, engage in open dialogue, deliberate across differences and participate meaningfully in collective decision-making. Democratic values cannot be transmitted through textbooks alone; they must be lived through educational practice.

South Korea illustrates this well. Its experiences of colonialism, war, democratisation and rapid modernisation remind us that democracy and peace are never permanent achievements but require continual civic engagement. Global citizenship therefore begins not by looking outward but by critically understanding one's own society.

This insight has profound implications for GCED. Global citizenship should not encourage learners to look outward while neglecting injustices within their own communities; it begins by cultivating the capacity to understand one's own society critically before engaging with global challenges. Only those capable of confronting inequality, discrimination and democratic deficits at home can meaningfully contribute to justice beyond national borders. Local citizenship and global citizenship are not competing identities–they are mutually reinforcing dimensions of democratic life.



△ Participants discuss issues of identity, gender, and displacement through the lens of GCED in a workshop held in Mae Hong Son Refugee Camp in September 2025.

Towards GCED 2.0: From Global Optimism to Critical Hope

The changing global landscape calls not for abandoning GCED but for reimagining it. The first generation of GCED emerged during an era of expanding globalisation and growing confidence in international cooperation. Today's world demands something different: a form of Global Citizenship Education capable of preparing learners to navigate geopolitical competition, democratic uncertainty, digital transformation, ecological crisis and persistent inequality without relinquishing the values of justice, human dignity and peaceful coexistence. This is what I describe as GCED 2.0.

GCED 2.0 shifts the focus from cultivating globally aware learners to nurturing critically engaged democratic citizens, placing critical inquiry at the centre of learning. It also moves beyond assuming universal models of knowledge and embraces epistemic pluralism, recognising that multiple intellectual traditions can contribute to our understanding of global challenges.

Rather than viewing citizenship merely as participation within established institutions, it emphasises democratic resilience, the capacity of citizens to sustain democratic dialogue, resist authoritarian tendencies and address conflicts through peaceful deliberation. Above all, GCED 2.0 is grounded in critical hope.

Critical hope is neither naive optimism nor passive expectation; it is the ethical commitment to pursue justice despite uncertainty. The question is, therefore, no longer whether GCED remains relevant but how it should evolve. If the 20th century required education for peace, the 21st century requires education that prepares democratic citizens to navigate a fragmented yet interconnected world. GCED is not becoming less necessary. It is becoming more intellectually demanding and more essential than ever.

THE WOMEN HOLDING UP THE WORLD'S FOOD SYSTEMS

From farms to markets and beyond, women are at the heart of global agrifood systems, yet millions still face barriers that limit their potential.

By **Mariola Acosta Frances** (Gender Officer & Strategic Coordinator, International Year of the Woman Farmer; Rural Transformation and Gender Equality Division, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) **and Huda Alsahi** (Social Policy Officer, Rural Transformation and Gender Equality Division, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations)



△ Türkiye, 2025. Beekeeper Nurcan Tekneci lifts a frame full of bees from the hive to check brood and comb condition.



△ Kebili, Tunisia, 2025. Kaother Aounalah and her business partner carefully select dates and remove their pits, preparing them for Sweet Jana's nutritious snacks and pastries.

In 2026, the world is marking the International Year of the Woman Farmer (IYWF), aimed at raising awareness of the vital role women play in agrifood systems and the challenges they face. These include insecure land tenure, financial and technical constraints, and limited access to services, digital skills and education.

Agrifood systems depend on a wide range of roles and skills that extend far beyond traditional notions of farming. Women are heavily involved in planting, weeding and harvesting crops, tending livestock, fishing and food processing. Yet the system also relies on women working as traders in local markets, managing agribusinesses, and moving food through supply chains from rural to urban areas and across international borders.

The International Year of the Woman Farmer 2026 also recognises women working behind the scenes in research laboratories, extension services, veterinary care, food safety, logistics and retail–ensuring that food is produced more sustainably, reaches people safely and moves efficiently. It further highlights women leading cooperatives, community groups and local organisations that shape access to land, finance, training and markets.

The Invisible Backbone of Agrifood Systems

In addition to these vital contributions, much of women's unpaid work remains unseen yet is essential to agrifood systems and to communities worldwide. Rural women care for children, support elderly family members, cook, clean, and collect water and fuel. This daily labour sustains households, strengthens communities and underpins all commercial activity within the agrifood system.

In short, agrifood systems are not solely about production; they are built on an ecosystem of both visible and invisible work, much of it carried out by women in ways that are rarely recognised but are fundamental to society.

Consider this: in 2021, women accounted for 40 per cent of the global agrifood workforce. They play an especially important role in agriculture in Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, where the sector employs 59 per cent and 49 per cent of working women, respectively. Despite these central roles, women worldwide continue to face barriers that limit their access to opportunities, resources and decision-making, preventing them from participating on equal terms in the global agrifood system.

Persistent Barriers and Emerging Challenges

Among the most significant of these barriers is secure access to, and control over, land. In many countries, land rights for women and girls remain insecure, restricting their economic opportunities, resilience and influence over farm and household decisions. Indeed, women have lower ownership or secure tenure rights over agricultural land than men in 85 per cent (67 out of 79) of countries reporting on Sustainable Development Goal indicator 5.a.1, which measures gender disparities in ownership of and rights to agricultural land.

Access to and control over land alone are not enough. Even where women have access to land, they frequently face constraints that limit their productivity and potential. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, for example, estimates that when cultivating



△ Kampong Thom, Cambodia, 2026. A close-up portrait of community forest protector Sreymom smiling while holding a wildflower.



△ Rwanda, 2026. Farm worker Evelyne Uwitonze harvests tea leaves at a plantation.

plots of the same size, women are 24 per cent less productive than men. These disparities are largely driven by unequal access to resources and services, as well as persistent discrimination.

The same structural inequalities are reflected in wages. On average, women in paid employment within agrifood systems earn just 78 cents for every dollar earned by men, highlighting enduring gaps in pay and opportunity across the sector.

A newer barrier is quietly reshaping many of these challenges: the digital divide. In low- and middle-income countries, women are around 12 per cent less likely than men to use mobile internet. Some 810 million women remain entirely offline, most of them in sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia. The gap is two to three times wider in rural areas than in urban or suburban regions.

For a woman farmer, a mobile phone is not a luxury but a lifeline. It can mean the difference between securing a fair price and selling at the farm gate; between receiving a timely weather alert and losing a harvest; or between holding a bank account in her own name and having none at all. When devices, connectivity and digital skills are out of reach, so too are the markets, services and information that increasingly depend on them.

Small Actions, Big Impact

When we hear about the challenges facing women farmers around the world, it is easy to wonder what difference one person can make. The answer is more than you might think.

We often underestimate how a single act of support or encouragement can ripple outward, creating change far beyond its starting point. In the children's book *The Dot* by Peter H. Reynolds, a teacher encourages a struggling student who cannot complete a drawing simply to make a mark on a page. She carefully frames the mark and displays it prominently in the classroom, transforming what might have seemed insignificant into something worth celebrating. This small act of encouragement sparks a journey of confidence, creativity and self-belief. The student, in turn, inspires another child to discover their own potential, illustrating how empowerment can pass from one person to the next.

As in *The Dot*, meaningful change often begins with a small step. Supporting women farmers may seem like a daunting global challenge, but individual actions can create ripple effects that extend far beyond what we can immediately see.

Start by staying informed. Learn about the vital roles women play across agrifood systems, not only as farmers, but also as entrepreneurs, innovators, traders and community leaders. Understanding both their contributions and the barriers they face is the first step towards meaningful change.

Support women-led businesses and local markets wherever possible. Choosing products from women farmers, producers and women-led agrifood enterprises helps strengthen livelihoods and creates opportunities for women to thrive economically.

Use your voice. Throughout the International Year of the Woman Farmer 2026 and beyond, share stories, celebrate achievements and amplify the voices of women farmers in your communities and online.

Advocate for fairer and more inclusive agrifood systems. In conversations with friends, in the workplace, or through civic engagement, support policies and initiatives that promote equal access to land, finance, technology, education and decision-making for women.

Finally, support storytelling, mentorship and knowledge-sharing. Encouraging women and girls to pursue opportunities in agriculture, connecting experienced farmers with the next generation, and celebrating women's achievements can help inspire future leaders and strengthen rural communities for years to come.

Shared Responsibility for the Future

The International Year of the Woman Farmer 2026 is an opportunity not only to recognise women's contributions, but also to build a future in which they can fully realise their potential. Small actions, multiplied across millions of people, can create lasting change.

Women's empowerment is a critical investment in rural development and central to accelerating the transition to more resilient and sustainable agrifood systems.

Empowering women farmers improves the wellbeing of individuals and households, boosts incomes and local economies, and strengthens community resilience.

The next time you sit down to a meal, consider the women behind it: growing, processing, trading, caring, innovating and sustaining the systems that make that meal possible. Supporting women in agrifood systems is a shared responsibility. When women are empowered, entire communities, economies and food systems benefit.

Disclaimer: The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the FAO.

> **"When we hear about the challenges facing women farmers around the world, it is easy to wonder what difference one person can make. The answer is more than you might think."**

BEHIND THE RICE PADDOCKS: CHALLENGES FACING WOMEN FARMERS IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Tackling inequality in agrifood systems is essential not only for gender parity, but for food security, climate resilience and sustainable development.

By **Kae Mihara** (Gender Officer, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific) **and Anna Pelkonen** (Gender Specialist, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific)



△ Nepal. A project beneficiary tends to her farmland, applying skills and knowledge gained through the United Nations Joint Programme.

Every day, millions of people across Asia and the Pacific consume food produced by vast and complex agrifood systems. Yet many of those who grow it remain largely invisible, particularly women farmers.

Women play a wide range of roles across agrifood systems, from production and processing to marketing and household nutrition. They are producers, workers, entrepreneurs and community organisers whose labour is essential to food security and rural livelihoods.

In Southeast Asia, for example, women make up about half of the agricultural labour force in several countries. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the picture in Southern Asia is different: overall female labour force participation is lower, yet 71 per cent of women work in agrifood systems, compared with 47 per cent of men. Agrifood systems are also a major source of employment for young women, particularly those aged 15–24.

Agriculture in the region is undergoing rapid transformation. Climate change, rising food production costs, urbanisation and technological change are reshaping rural life. In many communities, increasing numbers of men are migrating to cities or overseas for work, leaving women to take on greater responsibilities in agriculture. This shift, often described as the 'feminisation of agriculture', reflects women's expanding role in agricultural production and rural livelihoods.

Yet women farmers still face entrenched inequalities that limit their opportunities and curb their potential. They encounter barriers to land ownership, fair wages and access to resources. Ensuring women have equal rights and access to resources is not only a matter of equality; it is also critical to food security, climate resilience and rural development.

Unequal Systems and Women's Invisible Labour

Much of women's agricultural labour remains undervalued or overlooked. In economic terms, unpaid care work carried out by women and girls contributes an estimated $10 trillion to the global economy each year. Many women often combine farming with unpaid responsibilities such as cooking, cleaning, caring for children and elderly family members, and community organising. This 'triple burden' of productive, reproductive and community work leaves many with limited time, income security and decision-making power. The heavy burden of unpaid care work also undermines women's participation in labour markets, as well as their economic empowerment and physical and mental wellbeing.



△ Sholgara District, Balkh Province, Afghanistan. A close-up of a plate of vegetables.

Globally, women in wage employment in agrifood systems earn just 82 cents for every dollar earned by men. Even when managing farms of similar size, their productivity is often lower due to unequal access to resources, technology, finance and training.

Access to land remains one of the most significant barriers. In many parts of Asia and the Pacific, the FAO notes that women cultivate land without formal ownership or secure tenure rights. Without legal recognition or land documentation, they often struggle to access agricultural loans, government support programmes or climate adaptation funding. The absence of land titles in their names also limits women's participation in agricultural decision-making and long-term planning, reducing their control over the land they cultivate.

Access to agricultural technology presents another challenge. Mechanisation, precision irrigation, digital tools and climate-smart farming techniques are often less accessible to women due to financial constraints, social norms or limited training opportunities. As agriculture modernises, unequal access to innovation threatens to widen existing gender gaps.

Women farmers are also under-represented in leadership roles within co-operatives, producer organisations and agricultural governance systems. Even where women make substantial contributions to food production, decisions on land use, market access, pricing and investment are often dominated by men.

Climate Change and Growing Vulnerability in Rural Communities in Asia and the Pacific

Climate change is intensifying existing inequalities across agrifood systems. Women farmers are often disproportionately affected by floods, droughts, extreme heat and environmental degradation, as they have fewer resources to adapt and recover. While disasters may affect entire communities, access to information, resources and recovery support is uneven, and the ability to prepare for and



△ Tonga. Elema Uhatahi (30), a young vanilla farmer, regularly uses online resources to learn techniques such as hand-pollination.



△ Bangladesh, 2022. Morium at work on a seaweed farm.

withstand climate shocks depends largely on existing vulnerabilities.

For example, those without land titles may be unable to secure loans or access recovery support, placing them at a disadvantage compared with those who can invest in climate-resilient practices or apply for rehabilitation grants.

Recent research highlights the unequal impact of climate-related shocks. According to the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization report *The Unjust Climate*, each day of extreme heat reduces the total value of crops produced by women farmers by three per cent relative to men. Climate-related disasters also increase unpaid care burdens, disrupt access to markets and push households towards difficult coping strategies. Women, for instance, may be forced to suspend income-generating activities as their time and labour are redirected towards caring for children and older family members in the aftermath of crises.

Across the Asia-Pacific region, women farmers are heavily concentrated in climate-sensitive sectors such as rain-fed agriculture, fisheries and small-scale food production. Yet they are often excluded from climate finance, adaptation planning and disaster-risk management processes. These inequalities are not simply individual challenges, but are rooted in broader social norms, institutional barriers and unequal economic systems that shape access to resources, opportunities and power.

Women Farmers as Drivers of Resilience and Change

Although women farmers face significant constraints, they are also powerful agents of innovation, resilience and community development. Evidence consistently shows that empowering women in agrifood systems improves food security and strengthens community resilience. The FAO estimates that closing gender gaps in farm productivity and wages in agrifood employment could increase global gross domestic product by nearly $1 trillion and reduce food insecurity for 45 million people.

> **“Although women farmers face significant constraints, they are also powerful agents of innovation, resilience and community development.”**

Across Asia and the Pacific, FAO-supported initiatives are working with women farmers to strengthen livelihoods, improve food security and address structural inequalities. The organisation promotes gender-transformative approaches that tackle the underlying social norms shaping women's access to resources and participation in decision-making. These efforts aim not only to enhance livelihoods but also to address the institutional and social barriers that limit women's empowerment.

In Nepal, for example, the FAO contributes to the UN Joint Programme 'Accelerating Progress Towards Rural Women's Economic Empowerment', which focuses on strengthening women's skills, agricultural productivity and participation in local economies. Through nutrition field schools and capacity-building programmes, rural women learn improved crop production methods, safe food-handling practices and post-harvest management techniques. Access to inputs such as drought-resistant seeds, small-scale irrigation and time-saving tools helps increase production while reducing labour burdens. At the same time, the programme supports collective action by strengthening farmers' groups, building leadership and management capacity, and connecting women to local institutions and markets.

Improved access to resources, knowledge and services enables women to diversify production, enhance household diets and build local food reserves. It also creates opportunities for greater participation in community decision-making and economic activities, including the development of local value chains and off-farm employment. In turn, this contributes not only to higher incomes but also to greater resilience to climate and economic shocks.

Investing in women farmers benefits not only individuals but also strengthens household wellbeing and supports sustainable rural development. Women's empowerment in agriculture is therefore not a niche issue; it is central to sustainable development, climate resilience and the future of global agrifood systems.

Why Women Farmers Matter to All of Us

The food on our tables connects us to people and communities far beyond our immediate surroundings. Understanding the realities faced by women farmers encourages a more critical view of agrifood systems, inequality and shared responsibility in an interconnected world. Their experiences matter.

Greater awareness of the role of women farmers can lead to more informed choices–whether by supporting sustainable agrifood systems, promoting gender equality or advocating for more inclusive agricultural policies.

Women farmers are leaders, innovators, caregivers, producers and change-makers whose contributions shape the wellbeing of families, communities and entire societies.

Behind every meal is a story, and many begin with women farmers whose work sustains communities and helps feed our future.

GROWING FUTURES: STORIES OF WOMEN, TECHNOLOGY AND SHARED EMPOWERMENT IN ASIA

Faced with structural barriers, women farmers and ‘agri-preneurs’ are leveraging technology, networks and knowledge-sharing to expand opportunity for themselves and for the next generation.

By Xinyi Niu (Education for Girls’ and Women’s Empowerment Programme Coordinator, UNESCO International Research and Training Centre for Rural Education), **Junyu Huo** (Senior Advisor and Gender, Diversity, Sustainability Officer, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, East Asia) **and Yuchi Zhao** (Executive Director, UNESCO International Research and Training Centre for Rural Education; Associate Research Fellow, China Institute of Education and Social Development, Beijing Normal University)



△ Women farmers piloting a drone in Qilong Village.

The well-being of rural women, whether smallholders, stay-at-home mothers or community leaders, is under growing threat from compounding global crises and deeply entrenched social inequalities, which are exacerbated by the digital gender divide. With digital literacy gaps of up to 25 per cent in Asia, rural women have among the lowest levels of device ownership. Globally, 37 per cent of women do not use the internet at all.

This digital exclusion reinforces existing inequalities. Without reliable connectivity, rural women are shut out of digital financial services. With limited access to formal bank accounts, real-time market data and early warning systems, the livelihoods of women farmers are increasingly vulnerable.

To shift this paradigm, women must no longer be viewed as passive recipients of their realities but as active collaborators and technologically empowered agents of change.

This article brings together the stories of two women entrepreneurs: a community leader in China and a member of the Women’s Economic Empowerment (WEE) Triangular Cooperation Initiative in Cambodia. This initiative brings together the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), the UNESCO International Research and Training Centre for Rural Education (INRULED), and organisations in partner countries—Cambodia, Mongolia, Uzbekistan and Vietnam—to advance global development cooperation and gender equality through knowledge exchange, capacity-building, and context-specific solutions in the partner countries.

These women’s journeys began with simple ideas to improve the lives of their families and neighbours that rippled into communities of impact. Their stories illustrate that technologically empowered women farmers are not merely participants in development but leaders in shaping a more equitable, resilient and peaceful world.



△ Molika in her ‘Innovation Hub’.

China: From Tea Fields to New Possibilities

Women Tea Farmers in a Changing Village

In Qilong Village, Sichuan Province, tea cultivation has long been a cornerstone of the local economy. However, demographic shifts driven by urbanisation have reshaped the community. A significant proportion of younger men have migrated to cities in search of employment and higher incomes. Women stayed, becoming the majority in the village, responsible not only for households but also for sustaining agricultural production.

In households where a family’s primary income is dependent on male relatives working away from home, women can become financially reliant. This lack of financial autonomy can constrain life choices and, in some cases, leave women in vulnerable situations.

As the daughter of tea farmers, Mengyue Liu grew up witnessing these challenges first-hand. Supported by national initiatives promoting rural revitalisation and returning entrepreneurship, Liu returned home with a clear vision that Qilong’s tea, and the women who produce it, deserved recognition in wider markets and conversations. Her ambition was not only to expand market access, but also to create new opportunities for women within her community.

Adding Value to Tea Production through Digitalisation

Historically, the village relied on the sale of raw agricultural products. Farmers sold fresh tea leaves directly to wholesalers, with little local branding, limited processing capacity and minimal bargaining power. Without value-added components, incomes remained highly vulnerable to market fluctuations, placing considerable financial strain on local households.

Mengyue Liu set about systematically redesigning this model through the Wuyuan Planting Cooperative. Central to her approach was digital integration. Recognising that the core challenge lay in the absence of value-added production and branding, she shifted the focus from selling raw, unbranded leaves to processing and marketing finished, retail-ready tea products.

She introduced e-commerce initiatives, and harnessed short-video platforms to tell the cultural story behind Qilong’s tea. In doing so, she connected local production to wider consumer markets while strengthening the identity of the product itself.

This digital transformation also created new opportunities for women in the village. Many were trained in digital marketing, online store management, customer relations and packaging. Equipped with these skills, they were able to sell directly to consumers, capturing higher margins and increasing the value of their tea.

Dismantling Gender Barriers through



△ Technologies adopted at Cambodian Standard Development & Supply Co., Ltd.

Drone Technology

Agricultural drone technology has become an integral part of Mengyue Liu's tea garden management. Tending tea fields is physically demanding. Traditionally, pest control and fertilisation required workers to carry heavy, high-capacity sprayers across steep, mountainous terrain, labour that was often regarded as men's work.

In collaboration with local government and institutions, such as the Mengdingshan Academy for Cooperative Development, Liu and the Wuyuan Planting Cooperative introduced smart drones for automated fertilisation, pest control and real-time monitoring.

Women quickly embraced drone technology, which removed the physical barriers that had previously excluded them. By shifting the nature of the work from physical strength to technological skill, its introduction created a clear pathway for rural women to take on technical roles.

The Multiplier Effect of Female Drone Pilots

Today, the Wuyuan Planting Cooperative has established an aviation team that includes several certified female drone operators. The impact of these pioneers extends well beyond the fields.

At an individual level, women farmers have gained confidence and increased social recognition through mastering advanced agricultural technology. Financially, drone operation provides a stable and independent source of income. This economic autonomy, in turn, strengthens their voice and standing within both households and the wider community.

The presence of female drone pilots is also reshaping aspirations across generations. Children now grow up watching their mothers operate and manage sophisticated machinery, a powerful departure from traditional roles. In doing so, they begin to see that career paths are not confined by gender, age or background.

Through this quiet but profound shift, long-standing social norms are being redefined, and a new model of possibility is taking root for the next generation.

From Skills to Empowerment

Learning to operate a drone or manage an online retail platform is about more than acquiring technical ability. It is about building the confidence to step beyond familiar boundaries and engage with new possibilities. In this transformation, identity shifts. Women are no longer recognised solely as farmers but as creators of value, innovators and active decision-makers in shaping their own lives.

Cambodia: Cultivating Futures

Starting Small, Thinking Bigger

Molika did not set out to build one of Cambodia's leading agribusinesses. When she became pregnant with her first child, she was working as a sales and marketing executive for a Thai company, travelling frequently for work. Encouraged by her family to remain closer to home, she stepped away and began exploring new possibilities. Rather than viewing motherhood as a constraint, Molika saw it as an opportunity to build something meaningful closer to home.

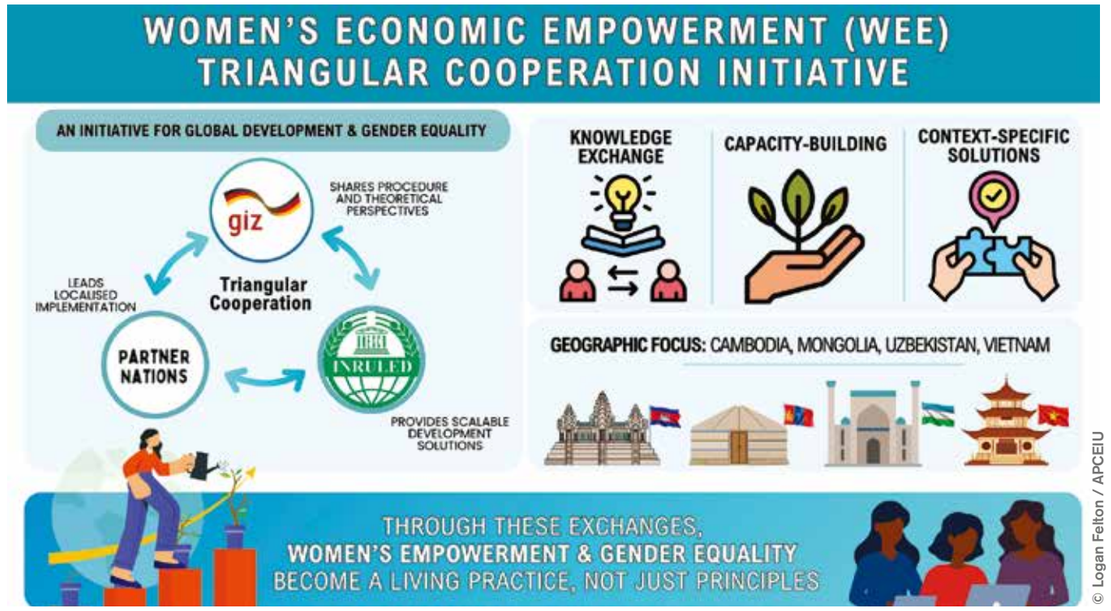
Drawing on her understanding of markets, she began cultivating vegetables and herbs for Cambodia's emerging hospitality sector. What began as a small agricultural venture gradually expanded through partnerships with farming families, producer groups and market actors. Over time, it evolved into a broader ecosystem, one centred on food safety, market access, climate-smart agriculture and inclusive growth.

Knowledge is Power

As demand grew, so did the challenges.

New opportunities continued to emerge, yet financing remained limited. In response, Molika made an unconventional decision: she returned to full-time employment, spending several years in the banking sector to better understand financial systems, lending practices, risk management and business growth.

This experience became a cornerstone of her company's later expansion and informed her leadership roles within the



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△ The WEE Triangular Cooperation Initiative is a collaboration between INRULED, GIZ, and partner organisations.

Young Entrepreneurs Association of Cambodia (YEAC) and the Cambodia Women Entrepreneurs Association. Today, Molika serves as a board member of YEAC and plays an active role in strengthening access to finance, promoting digital adoption and enhancing the competitiveness of Cambodian small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

'Knowledge is power,' she reflected. 'Every challenge requires new knowledge, and new knowledge creates new opportunities.'

For Molika, technology is how she responds to challenges, transforms experience into systems, and helps businesses grow alongside Cambodia's agricultural sector. In addition to experimenting with improved cultivation techniques, composting, water management systems, and new crop varieties, Molika's years in banking and digital business added another perspective. By understanding finance, cash flow, mobile banking, and digital services, she began to see technology not only as equipment but also as infrastructure that creates opportunities. This understanding later informed her use of e-commerce platforms and digital communication tools to help local farmers, producers, and SMEs reach wider markets, improve visibility and build trust with buyers.

For Molika, '*knowledge is power*' is more than a personal motto–it is a growth strategy. She believes that continuous learning and embracing emerging technologies can help 'agri-preneurs' improve quality, strengthen resilience, access new markets, and scale their impact.

Empowerment as a Shared Journey

From the stories of Mengyue Liu and Molika, a clear message emerges: In agricultural systems where women continue to face structural barriers, technology can serve as a powerful catalyst for empowerment.

For women farmers and 'agri-preneurs,' technology is not simply about machinery, platforms or digital tools. It expands access to information, improves production quality, reduces physical labour, strengthens food safety, opens new markets and supports business growth.

Technology, however, is not inherently empowering. Where digital literacy, connectivity, affordability or access to training remains unequal, it can just as easily reinforce existing divides. Yet when combined with education, mentorship, finance and context-sensitive support, it becomes a tool for overcoming barriers, building resilience and scaling impact.

Ripples of Reward

The women featured in this article demonstrate remarkable resilience, creativity and leadership. Yet their stories highlight an important truth: empowerment is rarely an individual achievement. As these entrepreneurs share their knowledge and experiences, they generate a ripple effect–influencing peers, strengthening communities and reshaping the systems in which they operate.

Ultimately, gender equality benefits everyone. It expands not only what women can achieve, but also what communities, institutions and societies can become. Empowerment, therefore, is neither a destination nor a gift bestowed by one group upon another. It is a shared journey shaped by care, learning, technology, exchange and the collective courage to act.

REWRITING PEACE IN ASIA THROUGH PEACE EDUCATION: A DIALOGUE BETWEEN TERUHISA HORIO AND SOON-WON KANG

From contested histories to shared futures, a Japanese scholar-citizen reflects on education, memory and reconciliation across the region.

Interview by Soon-Won Kang (Professor Emeritus, Hanshin University, Republic of Korea and the Former President of The Korean Society of Education for International Understanding)



△ The Ahn Junggeun Memorial Museum in Seoul, dedicated to the prominent independence activist who fought against Japanese colonial rule.



△ Professors Teruhisa Horio and Soon-Won Kang in front of the All Japan Teachers' Union sign, which reads: 'Never send our children to battlefields again.'

On 23 February 2026, Soon-Won Kang, Professor Emeritus at Hanshin University, interviewed Teruhisa Horio, Professor Emeritus at the University of Tokyo, at the offices of the All Japan Teachers' Union (Zenkyo) in Tokyo. The following interview, compiled by Professor Kang, reflects on the meaning of peace education in East Asia through the perspectives of two of the region's leading peace educators.

1 From 1910 to 1945, Japan occupied and colonised Korea. The relationship between the two countries seem to reflect this history, as the two countries appear close in some aspects, but distant in others. How has this colonial legacy motivated you, as an active scholar-citizen in Japan, to promote peace education in Asia?

Since 1992, I have been involved in educational research advocating for what I describe as 'a culture of peace, human rights, and symbiosis' as a representative of the Research Institute of Democracy and Education, All Japan Teachers' Union (Minken). Minken reflects on Japan's history of colonial rule and places particular emphasis on international exchanges with neighbouring Asian countries.

Korea was the first country with which I initiated such exchanges. In 1993, I visited the Ahn Junggeun Memorial Museum in Seoul. As a Japanese citizen, I have long grappled with the question of how Junggeun Ahn should be understood: as a terrorist who killed Hirobumi Ito or as a patriotic figure who assassinated a leading architect of colonial rule in pursuit of Korea's liberation.

Confronted with the reality that many countries and people across Asia endured profound suffering under Japanese colonialism and wartime occupation, I came to believe that peace education in Asia must centre on critical reflection, acknowledgement of historical injustice, and apology to those affected. It should also promote the recognition of historical truth, encourage open dialogue, and foster genuine mutual understanding among nations.

2 During the Ienaga Textbook Trial, in which you, Professor Horio, served as an expert witness, your argument proved decisive in the Tokyo District Court's Sugimoto judgement and ultimately contributed to the plaintiffs' victory. What positive impact did this have on education for mutual understanding among Asian countries?

Following the first 'ideological attack on textbooks' in 1955, the Japanese government introduced a system requiring all textbooks to undergo official approval in order to 'protect national interests'. As a result, many history textbooks failed to pass the screening process. In response, Professor Saburo Ienaga of the Tokyo University of Education filed a lawsuit in 1965, initiating what became known as the Ienaga Textbook Trial.

I appeared as an expert witness for the plaintiffs during the second trial under Judge Sugimoto. My testimony, grounded in my work as an education scholar, centred on the concept of the 'right to learn': the idea that the approval system infringed not only upon academic freedom but also upon children's right



© Soon-Won Kang

△ Books on children's right to education and peace education from Professor Horio's collection.



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△ Japanese and Korean teachers exchange ideas on practical GCED strategies and their implementation during the Korea-Japan Teachers' Network Workshop on GCED 2024.

to education, as well as the professional responsibilities of teachers.

In the early 1980s, international tensions intensified over the distortion of historical facts in Japanese history textbooks. In response, Chief Cabinet Secretary Kiichi Miyazawa issued an official apology, and the 'Neighbouring Countries Clause' was introduced. This was followed by the Kōno Statement (1993) and the Murayama Statement (1995), which together created a political climate more conducive to addressing the issue of textbook authorisation.

In its final ruling in 1997, the Supreme Court delivered a partial victory for Ienaga. While it upheld the legality of the textbook approval system, it also recognised the need for reform, stating that the process must not permit the denial or distortion of historical fact.

For my part, I have consistently maintained that children's right to learn the truth must be guaranteed, as enshrined in Articles 13, 23, and 26 of the Japanese Constitution, as well as Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. I articulated this position even before UNESCO's 1985 Declaration on the 'Right to Learn', and I remain convinced that this principle constitutes a fundamental human right, one that should be upheld not only for children in Japan but for all people across Asia and beyond.

3 In South Korea, the Doo-hwan Chun administration criticised Japanese textbooks for their distortion of history, leading to the establishment of the Independence Hall of Korea between 1982 and 1987 as a symbolic site commemorating national independence and resistance to Japanese rule. Yet, nearly 45 years later, mutual trust between Korea and Japan remains fragile. You have argued that upholding Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution is essential to building trust among independent Asian nations. This commitment also resonates strongly with UNESCO's vision of a 'culture of peace'. How are you and other advocates for peace across Asia working to advance this cause?

Reflecting on the causes of war and ensuring its prevention are fundamental principles of the United Nations. These ideals are also embedded in the Preamble and Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution. Article 9 represents a significant step beyond the UN Charter: arising from Japan's experience as a victim of atomic bombing, it constitutes a pledge to renounce war, reject all forms of belligerence, and refrain from maintaining armed forces. At the same time, it may be understood as an expression of remorse and apology to the estimated 20 million people across Asia who suffered as a result of Japan's wartime actions.

Article 9 is also aligned with the principles articulated in the Global Peace Charter, which affirms every individual's right to live in peace, and it reflects the universal norms championed by UNESCO. Upholding Article 9, therefore, is not solely a domestic concern for Japan; it is a commitment with profound implications for peace among the nations and peoples who experienced Japanese colonial violence. Should Article 9 be abrogated, Japan could re-emerge as a major military power, with the possibility that its young people might once again be sent into armed conflict, particularly to Asian regions already marked by instability. It is for this reason that many Asian countries remain wary of Japan's remilitarisation. The defence of Article 9 has thus become an issue of regional, not merely national, importance.

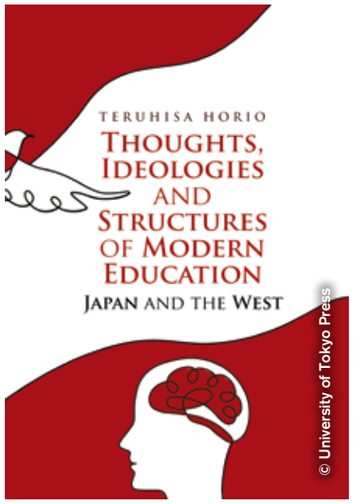
Professor Kyeongju Lee of Inha University has argued that solidarity among Asian nations is essential to safeguarding the right to live in peace for both the Japanese people and their neighbours, as envisaged in the Constitution's Preamble. Similarly, Dr Tetsu Nakamura, who worked extensively in Afghanistan with Peace Japan Medical Service (PMS), warned in testimony before the Japanese Diet that the 2015 security legislation risks violating the Constitution by undermining the individual's right to the pursuit of happiness and to live in peace. He further cautioned that such developments could erode the trust that Asian nations have placed in Japan on the basis of its long-standing commitment to Article 9.

4 You have emphasised the importance of peace and human rights education grounded in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and UNESCO's universal standards since the 1960s. In Korea, however, some have argued that values such as human rights and peace, often perceived as Western and individualistic, may hinder unity in a divided society like Korea's. Others suggest that so-called 'Asian values' are incompatible with these universal principles. How do you respond to the claim that UNESCO's values may not align with the Japanese ethos?

When I was studying the history of educational thought, specifically the work of French thinkers such as Rousseau, Condorcet, Victor Hugo, Piaget and Wallon, I became deeply fascinated by the ideals of public education and child-centred philosophy. In conjunction with these ideas, I saw the UN's ideal of peace as a common direction that must be pursued to achieve *l'esprit de vie libéré* (the emancipated spirit of life). I am convinced that education for peace and human rights, as articulated in the CRC and UNESCO's various declarations, represents a set of universal values applicable across all

> **"UNESCO's approach to peace education offers a valuable universal standard, one capable of addressing international tensions and misunderstandings through dialogue and non-violent means."**

> It is essential that we bring together scholars, educators and civic activists who share UNESCO's vision, encouraging them to collaborate in advancing peace and human rights education.



△ Professor Horio's 2024 book explores in greater detail the culture of peace, human rights and living together.

societies. In Japan, the principles enshrined in the Peace Constitution and the Fundamental Law of Education resonate strongly with, and indeed overlap with, the ideals set out in the Charter of the United Nations and UNESCO.

UNESCO's four pillars of learning – learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together, and learning to be–remain essential and should not be neglected in contemporary education. The model of education envisioned by UNESCO can and should serve as a shared framework for peace education, not only in Japan but also among neighbouring Asian countries.

All nations across Asia have experienced the profound suffering brought about by colonialism and war. As member states of UNESCO, they are bound by a shared commitment to fostering peaceful relations among peoples and nations, and as signatories and state parties to the CRC, they have pledged themselves to upholding the rights of children to education. In this context, UNESCO's approach to peace education offers a valuable universal standard, one capable of addressing international tensions and misunderstandings through dialogue and non-violent means.

5 Japan is one of the most advanced nations in Asia, both politically and economically. Despite a history marked by grievances between Korea and Japan, I believe the two countries must now work together in pursuit of peace in the region. As citizens of Asia, we share a responsibility to promote peace and human rights education, fostering a culture of peace grounded in solidarity. What, then, is to be done?

Most Asian countries are members of the United Nations and are particularly active within UNESCO. In this context, the Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding (APCEIU) has a vital role to play as a facilitator of peace in the region. It is essential that we bring together scholars, educators and civic activists who share UNESCO's vision, encouraging them to collaborate in advancing peace and human rights education. The wider dissemination of UNESCO's values as universal standards across Asia suggests that a genuine culture of peace can emerge, one capable of transcending the legacies of historical violence.

Asia is also the birthplace of the Bandung Conference of 1955. Its emphasis on national autonomy and self-reliance continues to offer valuable guidance, not only for Asia but also for other regions where post-colonial tensions exist, such as Africa and Latin America. At the same time, renewed efforts are needed to strengthen regional dialogue and cooperation, including through the revitalisation of organisations such as ASEAN.

Ultimately, however, the central challenge lies in transforming Asia's often tense regional dynamics into peaceful and cooperative relationships through education. Initiatives such as the development of shared history textbooks based on children's right to learn and the expansion of anti-nuclear peace education should be pursued across the region, particularly in light of ongoing geopolitical tensions.

Through a sustained commitment to peace and human rights education for all, Asia can reimagine itself as a community grounded in peaceful coexistence, mutual support, and the principle of 'living together and helping one another' (*kyōsei / sangsaeng*).

PLAY, PROTECT, PRESERVE: GAMIFYING CLIMATE ACTION FOR INDIGENOUS YOUTH

Meraki is placing Indigenous youth at the heart of climate solutions—through education, enterprise and policy engagement.

By Alvian Wardhana (CSO Lead Literasi Anak Banua, 11th Youth Leadership Workshop Alumna)



△ Participants pose for a group photo during a Meraki training session.

Approximately 90–95 per cent of Indigenous communities in Indonesia work in the informal sector, largely in smallholder farming, fishing and forest-based livelihoods. This leaves them acutely vulnerable to climate-related disruption.

According to Indonesia's National Adaptation Plan 2025–2030, climate change accounts for 59.4 per cent of the damage suffered by the informal workforce, chiefly through declining agricultural yields, loss of income, displacement caused by extreme weather, and environmental degradation. A study by Rainforest Foundation Norway found that less than 1 per cent of climate funds reach Indigenous and local communities, highlighting a significant gap in access to climate finance.

Formal education for Indigenous peoples also fails to support the transfer of green skills, further exacerbating climate vulnerability in regions such as the South Hulu Sungai Regency. This area is ranked among the 200 most at-risk regions in Indonesia. Within it, the Loksado district is home to 11 Indigenous villages considered among the most vulnerable to climate change.

Climate change is also undermining traditional farming knowledge: long-standing indicators, such as harvest timings, have become unreliable, leading to unstable yields. Since 2021, there have been two years without any harvest season, and between 1991 and 2021, at least 40 Indigenous families were forced to migrate due to prolonged periods of food scarcity, locally known as *paceklik*.

Against this backdrop, we established Meraki (*Merdeka Anak Muda Indonesia*), an Indigenous youth climate incubator that uses gamification to strengthen climate resilience as well as Global Citizenship Education (GCED) and Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) competencies among Indigenous young people.

Meraki offers an innovative and practical response to the growing impact of climate change on Indigenous communities, acting as a catalyst for change by supporting the development of green skills and improving access to climate finance and governance mechanisms.



△ Meraki's board game, designed to teach GCED values through interactive play.

Meraki's Structure

The initial phase of the Meraki project comprised a series of workshops focused on three core areas: GCED-SEL, entrepreneurship, and environmental problem-solving. Participants engaged with a range of pedagogical tools, including gamification, business modelling and advocacy strategies, to address a diverse range of climate challenges.

The project then transitioned into a more specialised phase centred on direct climate action. Building on their foundational knowledge, participants received mentoring to develop and implement their own initiatives. During this stage, organisers provided seed funding for each project, while mentors adopted a facilitative role, guiding participants and connecting them to resources such as project management tools, stakeholder engagement strategies, and monitoring and evaluation frameworks.

Upon completing their projects, participants reconvened to share lessons learnt and best practices. Their collective recommendations were subsequently compiled into policy briefs and formally submitted to the local government, ensuring that grassroots insights inform upstream policymaking.

Ultimately, Meraki encourages participants to act as changemakers on two fronts: through direct community action that sustains spaces for dialogue, and through formal engagement with local government policy.

Meraki Board Game: A GCED Climate Action Tool Empowering Indigenous Youth

The Meraki board game uses gamification to nurture GCED and climate-related skills among Indigenous youth. Each game centres on a specific value aligned with the EACH (Everyone a Changemaker) framework, ranging from environmental stewardship and empathy to resilience and humility. The game uses case studies positioned at the intersection of climate change, education, welfare, planetary health and the economy, to allow players to explore a range of advocacy tools.

In these scenarios, participants assume the roles of community members—teachers, cultural entrepreneurs, farmers, environmental activists or health workers—grounding their decisions in real-world contexts.

What sets this initiative apart is that the entire process, from identifying climate challenges to designing the board game itself, has been led by Indigenous youth. Developed using a design-thinking approach and supported by external donors, the game bridges the gap between local realities and global environmental concepts through scenarios directly relevant to Indigenous communities. One such scenario asks: 'Children in your village do not understand the impact of waste or deforestation. How would you, as a young person, design a nature school that draws on traditional practices, folklore and hands-on learning to teach Indigenous children about conservation and environmental protection?'

By working collaboratively to address challenges such as this, participants develop the practical skills needed to design and implement initiatives that respond to planetary health issues.

Step 1: Strengthen Indigenous Youths' Climate Resilience through Capacity Building

The project began with a series of workshops integrating GCED-SEL, environmental management and entrepreneurship skills, using local case studies and the Meraki board game as interactive pedagogical tools. These workshops were delivered in two formats across four rural areas, tailored to local social contexts.

In villages affected by intra-community tensions that made communal gatherings unfeasible, facilitators adopted a house-to-house approach, engaging participants individually in safe and neutral settings. In areas without such tensions, workshops were conducted in formal group sessions.

In total, 100 Indigenous youths received direct training. Assessments showed marked improvements across all three skill areas: a 56 per cent increase in GCED-SEL competencies, a 76 per cent improvement in environmental management skills, and a 91.3 per cent rise in entrepreneurship skills.

Step 2: Support Indigenous Youth Access to Climate Finance and Mentorship

Having strengthened their competencies through engagement with a range of pedagogical tools and local case studies, participants progressed to the second phase of the Meraki project. At this stage, they were connected to climate finance and structured mentorship programmes designed to translate their ideas into tangible action.

Meraki provided seed funding to eight collaborative projects, all situated within the broader Planetary Health Initiative. This ensured that each initiative remained aligned with overarching goals of environmental protection, community wellbeing and ecological sustainability. At the same time, participants were paired with mentors who offered expert guidance and connected them to the resources needed to develop their climate projects.

Together, the eight projects reached a total of 650 Indigenous participants. Spanning both non-profit and profit-oriented models, these initiatives addressed a range of issues, from water conservation and waste management to 'zine' production.

Beyond these collective efforts,



△ A Meraki board game workshop during a rural field visit.



△ Three youth representatives present policy proposals to the regency government.

participants also adopted individual climate actions, including embracing the 3Rs (reduce, reuse and recycle) and practising gardening to reduce consumption.

Step 3: Bridge the Gap in Climate Governance for Indigenous Youth

The final stage of the Meraki project centred on climate dialogue. In this phase, ideas and recommendations drawn from participants' practical experience and local concerns were synthesised into a formal set of legal and policy proposals. These were subsequently presented to the regency government by three youth representatives.

The dialogue yielded tangible outcomes, most notably a Regent's Decree formally recognising four customary law communities. It also opened pathways for Indigenous youth to participate in climate consultation processes, including engagement with the National Adaptation Plan.

Although this phase received limited media coverage, these institutional gains mark an important step towards embedding Indigenous voices in both local governance and global climate policy spaces.

As part of this broader advocacy effort, I also contributed to discussions at the annual intersessional meeting of the 18th Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Geneva, adding to the collective dialogue on the draft report, *Efforts to Implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: The Rights of Indigenous Peoples to Their Traditional Economies.*

Reflections on the Project

Despite being among those most acutely affected by climate change, Indigenous youth have long been marginalised within climate action frameworks. They face a wide range of barriers, from downstream challenges—such as limited access to climate finance and restricted opportunities for grassroots participation—to upstream exclusion from formal policymaking.

Meraki shows that Indigenous youth are more than capable of reshaping these spaces, drawing on ancestral knowledge and local wisdom to guide meaningful climate action. For example, in the context of Dayak communities in South Kalimantan, the project sought to incorporate the *simpukng* system—a steward-managed forest garden model characterised by minimal pesticide use, the sophisticated application of organic materials, and a deep ecological understanding of forest cycles and biodiversity.

The success of such practices suggests that Meraki's tools and pedagogical approaches can make a meaningful contribution to contemporary climate initiatives, bridging the gap between traditional knowledge systems and modern environmental solutions.

Through my experience with Meraki, I have learnt that meaningful participation is paramount. The most powerful initiatives are those rooted in hyperlocal contexts, with Indigenous youth at the centre of the design-thinking process. This is perhaps Meraki's most transferable lesson: that community-led, hyperlocal design is a source of strength rather than limitation and that this approach can be adapted to any context where marginalised youth are ready to lead.

It serves as a reminder that change need not begin at a grand scale; it can start small and grow. The momentum generated by Meraki will not end with this phase but continue to open new horizons for Indigenous youth in the years ahead.

TEACHING PEACE THROUGH PLAY

How a life-sized chessboard is transforming the way students resolve conflict.

By Sonam Pelden (Senior Teacher, Katsho Lower Secondary School)



△ Students at Katsho Secondary School play a game of Live Chessboard for Peace and Conflict Resolutions.



△ Katsho Secondary School's example shows that chess can be more than a competition.



△ Collaboration and discussion take centre stage in this game of Live Chessboard.

In the valleys of Bhutan, a quietly radical idea has been reshaping how young people think, collaborate and resolve conflict. The Live Chessboard for Peace and Conflict Resolution initiative at Katcho Lower Secondary School blends the timeless strategy of chess with contemporary education for global citizenship and peace.

The concept is simple: transform the schoolyard into a life-sized chessboard, with students stepping into the roles of the pieces themselves. Every move becomes intentional, strategic and rooted in mutual understanding. What began as a creative classroom experiment has evolved into a meaningful programme that nurtures strategic thinking, teamwork and empathy among learners.

Background of the Initiative

Conflict is an inevitable part of human interaction, and schools are no exception. Traditionally, conflict resolution in lower secondary settings leans heavily on adult intervention. At Katsho Lower Secondary School, however, educators envisioned an approach that gives students the confidence and tools to resolve disputes themselves.

Chess, with its emphasis on strategy, patience, and forward-thinking, offered the perfect foundation. Rather than confining the game to boards and wooden pieces, the school reimagined it as a dynamic, immersive experience: a life-sized chessboard painted across the playground, with students playing the roles of the pieces.

The initiative aligns closely with the principles of Global Citizenship Education (GCED), which emphasises respect, empathy, collaborative problem-solving and responsible decision-making. By turning abstract ideas about conflict and cooperation into something tangible and playful, the project helps students internalise these values in ways beyond conventional classroom teaching.

Key Activities

The initiative unfolds through a series of structured, engaging, and developmentally-appropriate activities that blend the mechanics of chess with practical lessons in peace and conflict resolution.

1. Live Chess Matches

Split into two teams, students move according to the rules of chess but with one crucial twist: every move must be agreed upon collectively. A student playing a bishop, for instance, must first negotiate with teammates representing other pieces to ensure coordination and avoid clashes. Teachers play the role of facilitators, guiding students to resolve disagreements cooperatively rather than stepping in to settle them.

2. Conflict Scenario Workshops

Alongside the live matches, students take part in workshops where they re-enact everyday school conflicts. They are encouraged to apply chess-based strategies to these scenarios. The idea of 'thinking two moves ahead', for example, becomes a lesson in anticipating the consequences of one's actions in real-life situations.

3. Team Strategy Sessions

Before each match, teams gather to plan their approach. Beyond tactics, these sessions discuss fairness, cooperation and empathy and how these values shape their decisions on the board. The process reinforces key GCED competencies by ensuring every voice is heard and considered.

4. Reflection and Debriefing

After each activity, students participate in guided reflection. They explore which strategies succeeded, how disagreements were handled and how it felt when their ideas were included or disregarded. Teachers help them connect these insights to wider social contexts, emphasising how peaceful negotiation and strategic thinking extend far beyond the school grounds.

5. Community Engagement Events

Recognising that peacebuilding is a collective effort, the school occasionally invites parents, local leaders and students from neighbouring schools to join live chess events. These gatherings create an inclusive atmosphere within the broader community and encourage students to apply their learning in real-world interactions.

> **Beyond the simple delight of stepping across a giant board, students acquire life skills that reach far beyond the playground. They learn to collaborate, empathise, plan strategically and resolve conflicts peacefully…**

Main Outcomes

Since its implementation, the Live Chessboard initiative has produced a range of benefits, both in the classroom and in students' wider social interactions.

1. Enhanced Strategic Thinking

Students demonstrate sharper problem-solving skills. By learning to anticipate outcomes and weigh consequences, they develop critical thinking skills that readily transfer to their studies.

2. Improved Collaboration and Communication

Discussing moves and reaching consensus strengthens communication skills. Students learn to articulate their reasoning, listen actively and compromise when needed. Team strategy sessions have been especially empowering for more introverted students, who gain confidence as their ideas are heard and valued.

3. Empathy and Conflict Management

Taking on the roles of chess pieces helps students recognise and appreciate different perspectives. A student playing a pawn, for example, experiences how small, coordinated actions can create significant impacts that shape the game.

4. Positive School Climate

Teachers report a noticeable decline in minor day-to-day conflicts as students increasingly apply the strategies they practice on the chessboard to real-life situations. The live chess sessions cultivate a culture that values dialogue, patience and cooperation.

5. Community Awareness

The initiative's influence extends beyond the school. Parents and community members engage in conversations about

empathy, conflict resolution and strategic decision-making. Community chess events have sparked interest in using creative, playful approaches to teach social skills and promote a culture of peace.

Lessons Learned

Implementing an initiative as innovative as the Live Chessboard has generated a wealth of insights, which are valuable guidance for educators and schools looking to adapt the programme in their own contexts.

1. Active Facilitation is Key
Teachers must strike a careful balance between offering guidance and granting autonomy. Too much intervention risks stifling students' decision-making; too little can lead to confusion or frustration. Effective facilitators model respectful communication and help students debrief their experiences in constructive, reflective ways.

2. Adaptability Ensures Engagement
Not all students start off with the same familiarity with chess, so rules and activities need to be flexible. Simplifying moves for beginners or creating mixed-ability teams ensures everyone can participate meaningfully. Creative variations – from storytelling elements to scenario-based challenges – help sustain enthusiasm and encourage dynamic learning.

3. Reflection Deepens Learning
Structured reflection is essential. Without it, students may enjoy the activity but miss its deeper lessons. Open-ended questions such as, 'How did your strategy affect the team?' or 'What did you learn about resolving disagreements?' prompt critical thinking and help students internalise the core principles of peace education.

4. Curricular Integration Strengthens Impact
Linking chess-based activities to subjects like social studies, ethics or literature helps students see how strategic thinking applies beyond the playground. Discussing historical conflicts after a match, for example, can deepen their understanding of negotiation, compromise and leadership.

5. Community Involvement Amplifies Results
Bringing parents and community members into the initiative reinforces the relevance of conflict resolution skills outside school. When students see these abilities valued by the wider community, they are more motivated to apply them in everyday interactions.

Relevance to GCED

The Live Chessboard initiative embodies the core principles of GCED in striking and practical ways:

1. Strategic Thinking as a Life Skill
Chess teaches students to plan ahead, weigh options and anticipate consequences–abilities that matter not only in academic settings but also in making thoughtful, responsible choices as global citizens.

2. Empathy and Perspective-taking
By stepping into different roles on the chessboard, students practise empathy and learn to appreciate multiple viewpoints. These qualities underpin intercultural dialogue, human rights awareness and peaceful coexistence.

3. Cooperation and Social Responsibility
Success in the live chess environment depends on communication, consensus and collective effort. Students come to understand that individual actions shape the group's success, a direct reflection of the interconnectedness emphasised in GCED.

4. Conflict Resolution and Peace
The initiative offers students practical, everyday experience in resolving disagreements without aggression. Peace education becomes something lived rather than merely taught, reinforced through repeated practice in a supportive environment.

5. Empowerment and Agency
GCED encourages learners to see themselves as active contributors to their communities. By giving students real decision-making power, the programme nurtures confidence, responsibility and leadership.

Practical Tips for Replication

Schools looking to adopt a similar approach may find the following practical guidelines helpful:

- **Start Small**: Begin with a classroom-sized grid before expanding to a full playground layout. This allows students and teachers to grow comfortable with the format at a manageable scale.
- **Simplify the Rules**: Modified moves or shortened games help maintain engagement without overwhelming beginners.
- **Involve All Learners**: Rotate roles so every student experiences different perspectives on the board. This ensures inclusivity and deepens understanding of teamwork and strategy.
- **Schedule Reflection Sessions**: Set aside time after each activity for structured discussion. Reflection is paramount for helping students connect gameplay with real-life conflict-resolution skills.
- **Train Facilitators**: Equip teachers with strategies for guiding dialogue, mediating disputes and linking chess-based insights to broader life skills.
- **Engage the Wider Community**: Invite parents, local leaders and neighbouring schools to take part in special events. Community involvement reinforces the programme's relevance and impact beyond the classroom.

Endgame Reflections

The Live Chessboard for Peace and Conflict Resolution shows how creativity, play and strategic thinking can converge to nurture young global citizens. Beyond the simple delight of stepping across a giant board, students acquire life skills that reach far beyond the playground. They learn to collaborate, empathise, plan strategically and resolve conflicts peacefully, which are essential competencies for the 21st century.

This initiative demonstrates that education for peace need not be confined to textbooks or lectures. When learning is hands-on, engaging and grounded in shared values, it empowers students to act with empathy, think critically and contribute to harmonious communities. Through this living chessboard, the abstract principles of global citizenship become tangible, playable and, most importantly, actionable.

IDENTITY BEYOND BORDERS, BEYOND BIAS

Join Myanmar's displaced youth as they reshape their identities, community and the meaning of education.

By Thandar Aung (Project Lead of Identity Beyond Border, Beyond Bias Project; CrossBorder Youth Alliance, Myanmar)



△ Emotional well-being through social-emotional learning was a core pillar of this project.

What does it mean to belong when political boundaries shape your reality?

For many young people in Myanmar, this is no longer an abstract question but a lived experience. In recent years, political upheaval, protracted conflict and deepening economic hardship have driven thousands to leave their homes in search of safety and opportunities. Many have ended up in border regions, particularly along the Thailand-Myanmar frontier, carrying with them both the hope of a better future and the weight of profound uncertainty. These places, often described as 'in-between,' are neither quite home nor entirely foreign. Forcibly displaced individuals may find temporary safety here, but rarely achieve stability: Financial strain, legal restrictions and limited access to education or work create structural barriers that are difficult to overcome. Yet the emotional and social consequences of uprooting one's life are often more complex than these visible obstacles. Feelings of loneliness, disconnection and fractured identity are widespread among displaced and migrant youth, though they are frequently overlooked.

The youth-led initiative Identity Beyond Borders, Beyond Bias emerged in response to these challenges. Combining Global Citizenship Education (GCED) with Social-Emotional Learning (SEL), the project aims to create a safe, nurturing learning environment for displaced and migrant youth along the Thailand-Myanmar border.

Its premise is simple but powerful: if displacement reshapes how young people see the world, then education must evolve too. Wherever they find themselves, young people need spaces to reflect on their experiences, reconnect with others and with themselves, and rebuild a sense of belonging. This is where Identity Beyond Borders, Beyond Bias begins.

Learning Beyond Survival

Identity Beyond Borders, Beyond Bias is a response to the often unspoken struggles faced by young people who migrate or are displaced.

This youth-led project creates an environment where learning becomes a process of self-discovery, connection and growth, rather than a simple exercise in absorbing information. The project weaves together GCED and SEL, two powerful approaches that complement each other. While SEL focuses on the emotional tools required to navigate life, such as self-awareness, empathy, communication, and resilience, GCED supports young people in engaging with diversity, confronting discrimination, and thinking beyond borders. Together, they form a holistic learning framework: GCED offers principles and values, while SEL cultivates the interpersonal and emotional capacities required to bring those values into practice.

When combined, these approaches empower young people to grow into confident, compassionate and socially conscious adults. For displaced and migrant youth, this blend of GCED and SEL is not a luxury. It is a necessity shaped by the realities of their displacement and a foundation for rebuilding identity, agency and belonging.

A Space to Reflect, A Space to Belong

The journey began online, where young people from diverse backgrounds gathered in a shared virtual space. Conversations quickly moved beyond introductions, opening up discussions about identity and the personal, cultural and social forces that shape it. Participants reflected on how community, gender and displacement had influenced their sense of self and the way they saw the world.

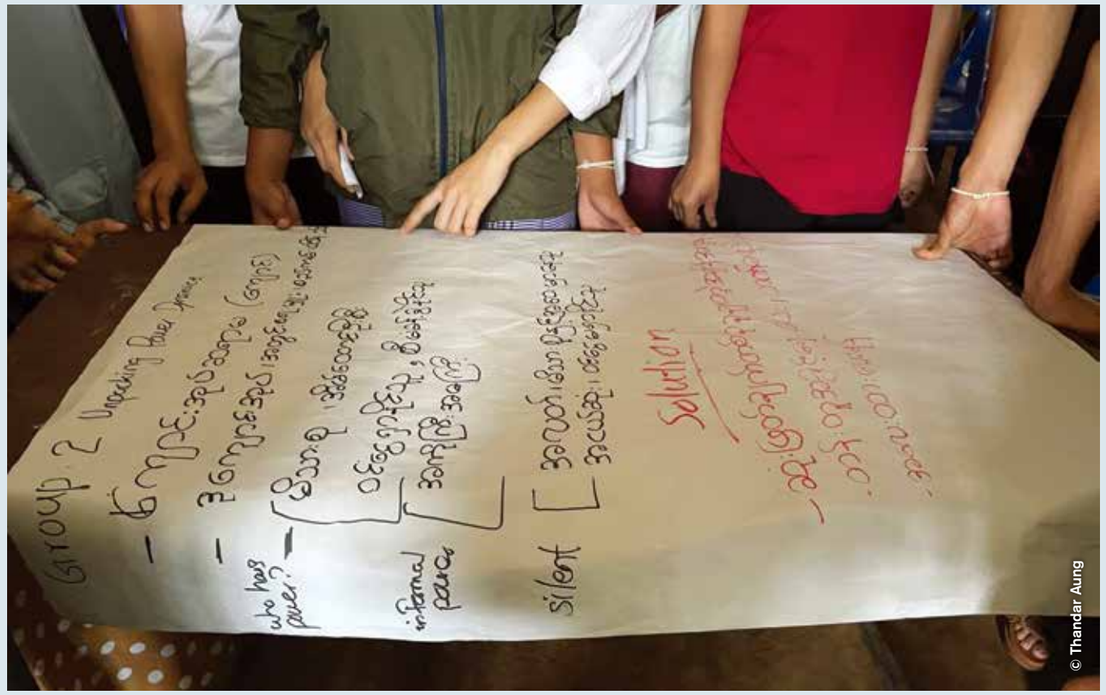
But the real transformation unfolded when these conversations shifted from the digital realm into a shared physical space. In September 2025, a full-day programme was held at Karenni National College within the Mae Hong Son Refugee Camp, situated along the Thailand-Myanmar border. Rather than relying on lectures, the workshop centred on dialogue. More than 70 participants explored how their identities had been shaped both by their origins and forced migration. They discussed power dynamics, gender roles and the subtle ways inequality is woven into everyday life.

Key ideas, such as global solidarity, shared responsibility, empathy and the principles of GCED were introduced through a GCED booklet translated into Burmese. The full-day programme also shared information on alternative learning pathways and scholarship opportunities to encourage continued education.

Yet the most meaningful moments came from listening: participants heard one another's stories, challenges and perspectives. In that space, diversity was not a barrier to overcome but a source of collective learning.



△ A group photo of workshop participants at Karenni National College.



△ The most meaningful moments of empowerment came from open discussion and exchange.

Healing Through Learning

The marks left by displacement are not always visible. For that reason, emotional well-being was never treated as extraneous to the project; it was a core pillar. Through well-being exercises, group conversations and guided reflection, participants learned to recognise and manage their emotions. They explored coping mechanisms, practised supporting one another and developed skills for handling stress and building emotional resilience. Each session was held with care, ensuring a respectful, private and safe environment. Gradually, something shifted: uncertainty gave way to mutual understanding.

Yet, it was the participants themselves who ultimately shaped the project's impact. In its final phase, they launched a youth-led social media campaign, Voicing Identity Beyond Borders, transforming learning into action. Through artwork, videos and reflective writing, they shared their experiences of identity, belonging and growth, bringing those stories into the public sphere. Their voices travelled far beyond the workshop, sparking thousands of online interactions and opening conversations around issues that are so often overlooked.

In a world where displaced and migrant youth are frequently spoken about but rarely heard, this project offered them a platform and the power to speak for themselves.

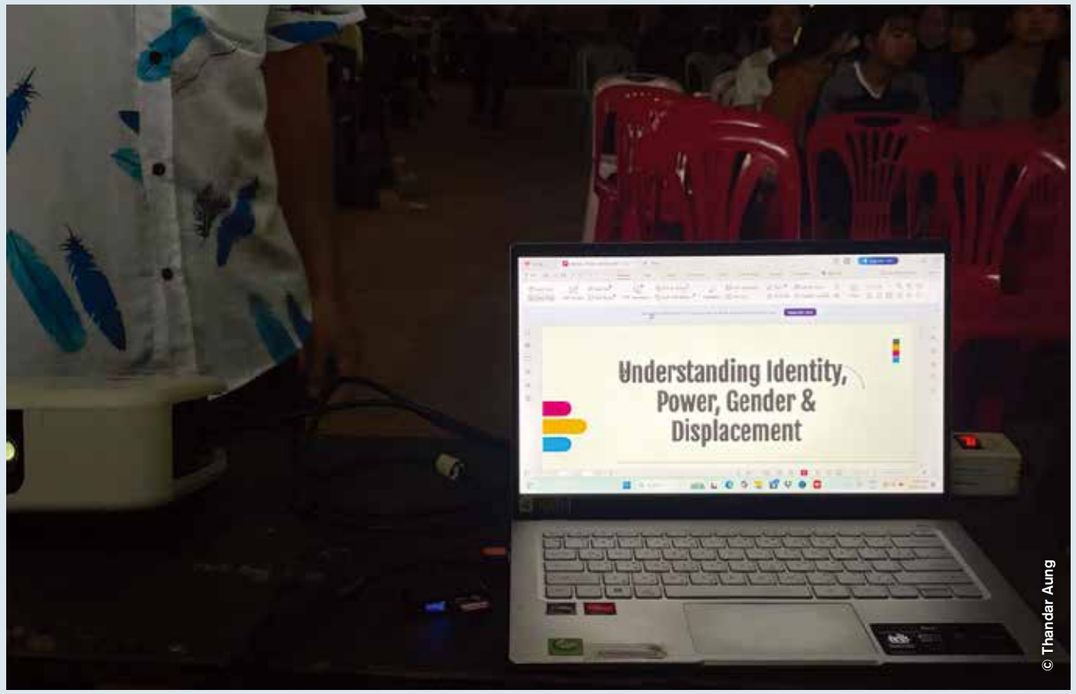
Small Spaces, Big Impact

Although reaching thousands online and facilitating in-person engagement are achievements in their own right, the influence of Identity Beyond Borders, Beyond Bias cannot be captured by numbers alone. Its deepest impact lies in the quieter shifts.

Participants spoke of feeling more supported and more connected. They immersed themselves in discussions and activities, revealing their capacity for leadership and thoughtful engagement.

These changes matter. They show

> **"Conversations about gender, belonging and displacement are deeply personal; they demand compassion, trust and patience."**



△ SEL and GCED principles prove valuable in creating an inclusive and welcoming space.

how, when given the right space, displaced and migrant adolescents can emerge as leaders, thinkers and changemakers in their own communities.

What We Learned Along the Way

By prioritising safe spaces, adapting to local realities and elevating young people's voices, the initiative was able to create an educational experience that felt relevant, respectful and authentic. Establishing a welcoming, inclusive atmosphere proved essential.

One of the project's most powerful lessons was that emotional work cannot be separated from identity-building. Conversations about gender, belonging and displacement are deeply personal; they demand compassion, trust and patience. Integrating SEL into these discussions was not simply helpful; it was indispensable, enabling participants to process their experiences and build emotional resilience.

Another key lesson was the importance of strong coordination between the host institution and the local community. Working in a refugee or border context requires far more than good intentions; it demands continuous communication, mutual respect and trust. Close collaboration with Karenni National College and community members was crucial in ensuring that the project's activities were relevant, culturally sensitive and safely delivered. Their partnership shaped not only the programme's logistics but also its ethos, underscoring the principle that meaningful initiatives must be created with communities, not for them.

The project also highlighted the complexity of engaging with a diverse group of young people. Participants brought with them a wide range of life experiences, educational backgrounds and cultural identities. This diversity enriched the dialogue, but it also required facilitators to remain flexible and responsive. Language, tone and facilitation methods had to be adapted with care to ensure that every participant felt valued, included and safe.

Looking Forward: Opportunities Beyond Borders

As displacement continues to shape the lives of millions of young people worldwide, the need to reimagine education becomes ever more urgent. Access alone is no longer sufficient; education must serve as a space for transformation, healing and connection. Identity Beyond Borders, Beyond Bias offers a compelling example of what an affect-oriented approach to education can accomplish. It shows how learning becomes genuinely empowering when it is inclusive, participatory and grounded in both SEL and GCED.

To sustain the project's impact and the community it has nurtured, the Identity Beyond Borders, Beyond Bias team has expanded its voluntary mentorship activities with displaced and migrant youth in refugee camps. This ongoing commitment demonstrates how combining GCED with SEL can create learning experiences that are not only meaningful but transformative. Borders may dictate where young people live, but they should never define the limits of their potential.

WHY ARE YOU THE BEST CANDIDATE FOR THIS ROLE?

In a world shaped by climate uncertainty, one young changemaker shows how courage and consistency can matter more than credentials.

By Bivuti Basnet (GCED Youth Network Core Member)



△ Members of Green Generation join hands after completing an environmental project.



△ As a youth-led initiative, Green Generation sows seeds of change by turning learning into action.



△ Large-scale tree-planting initiatives were part of Green Generation's activities.

This is a question I have been asked many times in interviews, but one I have asked myself even more often. When I first entered the world of climate activism, I had no academic qualifications or technical expertise in climate science. What I did have was a growing awareness that I could no longer remain a bystander in a rapidly changing world.

In Nepal, I grew up in landscapes that no longer behaved as my elders described. Rivers swelled unpredictably, landslides carved fresh scars into familiar hills, and the monsoon arrived late or all at once. Climate change was not a distant concept here; it was woven into daily life.

For years, I observed these shifts with a mixture of concern and hesitation. I wanted to act, yet a quiet voice suggested that climate advocacy belonged to those with technical training or academic credentials. Like many young people from backgrounds in social advocacy, public health and education, I admired climate experts from afar and carried a persistent doubt that I did not belong in spaces beyond my formal training.

Yet as the world continued to shift, I found myself stepping forward, tentatively at first, then with growing confidence, and eventually with a sense of shared purpose. I came to understand that environmental responsibility is not confined to any single discipline; it is a human responsibility. I chose to learn, to adapt, and to take initiative, often before I felt entirely ready.

That is how my journey into climate advocacy began: not with credentials, but with curiosity, consistency and a willingness to act.

Willingness Triumphs Over Expertise

Reflecting on this question gradually moved me from observation to participation. My path into climate advocacy did not begin with a single defining moment, but rather through an accumulation of small, formative experiences of watching ordinary people respond to environmental challenges.

During floods, local residents organised evacuations themselves. In the aftermath of landslides, communities cleared debris and repaired water systems with their own hands. External assistance would arrive eventually, but rarely in time to save those in critical need.

> **Leadership often begins with willingness to act rather than expertise.**

These individuals were not academic specialists in disaster response or rehabilitation. They were simply people acting out of concern, responding to immediate realities. From this, I came to understand something both simple and profound: leadership often begins with willingness to act rather than expertise.

Climate and social challenges do not pause for perfect qualifications. Neither do the communities that face them.

What Happens When Youth Stop Watching and Start Leading?

In 2022, I applied to take part in the 8th Youth Leadership Workshop on GCED, recognising that my initiatives needed a stronger foundation and a broader perspective. It was there that I learned to connect my local actions with a broader context, making my work more purposeful and coherent. GCED encouraged me to approach my efforts more thoughtfully, with a greater emphasis on connection, responsibility and long-term impact.

Shortly after the workshop, I took on a leadership role within the Green Generation (*Hariyo Pusta*) programme. There, I found myself reshaping my approach in line with what I had learned. I began to think more deliberately about how to make the project more participatory and inclusive, and to ensure that the activities themselves were not only engaging but also reflective and meaningful for those involved.

Green Generation was a youth-led programme delivered by teams from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and We for Change, spanning 14 municipalities across emerging cities in Nepal. The initiative aimed to promote climate adaptation and sustainable urban planning while empowering young people to take meaningful action within their communities.

Over the course of the programme, we engaged 3,124 students and supported the establishment of 42 school eco-clubs (grades 5-8), fostering environmental awareness and actively advancing the Government of Nepal's Green School Directive.

I trained and mentored 14 provincial project in-charges, equipping them with skills in climate advocacy, leadership and community engagement. I also led interactive sessions on themes such as climate action strategies and the critical role of youth in shaping sustainable futures. In addition, we distributed air-quality monitors to schools, enabling students to track and better understand pollution in their semi-urban and urban environments.

To translate learning into action, eco-club members organised cycle rallies promoting green transport, installed waste bins to improve waste management, and led large-scale tree-planting initiatives across all seven provinces. These activities strengthened collaboration with local civil society organisations, youth networks and municipal authorities, demonstrating how coordinated efforts can empower communities.

Through this experience, I came to understand that effective leadership rests on reflection, consistent action and the ability to connect local initiatives to broader societal goals. Applying GCED principles–such as empathy, collaboration, and the linking of local and global perspectives–helped make the programme



△ Bivuti's story shows that change is achieved by those who are willing to take the first step.

more inclusive, engaging and impactful.

Where Local Lives Meet Global Realities

The successful application of GCED principles in my work helped strengthen my confidence. It demonstrated that, even without a technical background, I could collaborate with teams, engage with communities and contribute to small but meaningful interventions. It also reinforced a valuable lesson: that consistency matters more than intensity and that showing up regularly is what creates sustained impact.

This understanding reshaped how I approached my work. I became more intentional about sharing knowledge, supporting community-led initiatives, and connecting local experiences to broader global conversations.

Over time, I began mentoring young people from different parts of the world on GCED principles, encouraging them to take small but meaningful steps through eco-clubs, peer-led sessions and community-level awareness initiatives. In doing so, I found myself gradually taking on new roles, not only as an activist, but also as a facilitator of learning and a bridge between local realities and global perspectives.

A Collective Shift in Youth Leadership

Across Nepal and the wider region, youth engagement in climate advocacy is evolving. It is becoming more collaborative, more grounded in communities, and less focused on individual expertise.

There is a growing understanding that it is not necessary to have all the answers before starting. Being open to learning is often enough.

Over time, I stayed engaged with the GCED network while balancing graduate study and a full-time job. It became one of the few spaces I continued returning to because it kept me grounded and learning.

In 2024, I had the opportunity to attend the Youth4GCED Regional Workshop in Pakistan, which was my first international experience. The workshop allowed me to meet young leaders from across the South Asia region, share experiences, and learn from their approaches to youth engagement and global citizenship. It helped me reflect on my own work, consider new strategies, and see patterns of how different initiatives in one country connect to regional efforts for a global cause.

This experience, together with my regular engagement in the GCED network, paved the way for my selection to the core team of the GCED Youth Network, where I could apply what I had learned, mentor fellow youth, and help advance global citizenship.

What Does the Future Look Like?

I have come to understand that leadership does not depend on perfect expertise. Rather, it grows through curiosity, reflection and sustained effort. By connecting personal action with global perspectives, engaging with communities, and committing to continual learning, I have seen how small, consistent contributions can lead to meaningful change. GCED has been central to this journey, helping me link local realities to global challenges, collaborate with diverse peers, and encourage others to take purposeful action.

The future of global citizenship will be shaped by young people who are willing to act, to learn and to work together. Courage and curiosity are essential, but so too is consistency. Growth takes time; it is through steady effort and ongoing engagement that it truly unfolds.

Step by step, young people are not only preparing for their roles as global citizens; they are already growing into them.

LESSONS FROM THE PAST, HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

In Timor-Leste, personal and collective memories of conflict continue to offer lessons in resilience, healing and the enduring pursuit of peace.

By Flamina Freitas Belo (Education Officer for Peacebuilding and Human Rights at Centro Nacional Chega!, Timor-Leste)



△ International visitors participating in an educational and historical tour of Aipelo Prison, Liquiça Municipality.

When I think about peace, I do not think of political agreements or the absence of war. Instead, I recall the moments that made me feel safe and hopeful. Peace lives in these memories and shapes how I understand myself, my community and my country. For those who come from societies affected by conflict–such as my country, Timor-Leste–peace is not simply an idea; it is a living memory, cherished and passed down through generations.

Growing up, my family shared memories of the difficult years of conflict during Timor-Leste's struggle for independence. Much was left unsaid in their stories, but even as a child, I could feel the fear, loss, resilience, and hope in their voices. Their stories conveyed powerful lessons about solidarity: how families, neighbours and communities protected one another by sharing what little they had. Above all, they held on to the belief that one day peace would come.

Although I did not share their lived experiences, these stories of resilience became part of my memory and instilled in me a deeper understanding of peace. They taught me to see history not as a series of dates and events, but as a shared human experience. Through these memories, I learned to value the freedom to live without fear, speak openly, and build relationships founded on respect and understanding.

Growing Up with the Legacy of Conflict

I was born in a country where the legacy of conflict continues to shape the lives of those around me. Timor-Leste's history of colonisation, occupation and struggle for independence profoundly influenced the experiences of my parents, grandparents and wider community.

Growing up, family and community gatherings often became occasions for sharing memories of the past. Older relatives spoke about the hardships they endured during the occupation, including displacement, fear, loss and grief. Yet alongside these painful recollections were stories of courage, solidarity and resilience. Through their experiences, I learned that even in the darkest times, people can find ways to preserve hope, dignity and humanity.

The legacy of conflict also shaped my generation. Through education and public acts of remembrance, we learned about the sacrifices made by those who fought for our country's independence. National commemorations, memorials and museums continue to preserve these memories and pass them on to younger generations.

At the same time, growing up in the aftermath of conflict meant witnessing a society still undergoing a process of healing and reconciliation. Although many families carried painful memories, there was a shared determination to rebuild relationships and create a more peaceful future.

This commitment to peace deepened my appreciation for justice and human rights and inspired me to learn more about my country's history so that I could contribute to building a culture of peace for future generations. These experiences reinforced the importance of truth and accountability in the process of reconciliation.

The Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation (CAVR; *Comissão de Acolhimento, Verdade e Reconciliação*) documented the experiences of victims and survivors, recognising the suffering caused by the conflict while promoting understanding among communities. The work of the CAVR demonstrated that national healing requires more than simply moving beyond the past; it requires confronting past injustices with honesty and working collectively towards reconciliation, justice and lasting peace.



△ The Chega! Museum exhibition showcases the community reconciliation process, illustrating how local people worked together to rebuild trust and foster peace after conflict.

Connecting Memory, History and Peace Education

Memories are not merely echoes of the past; they are valuable lessons for the present and future. By reflecting on both individual and collective memories, societies can gain a deeper understanding of the roots of conflict and the challenges involved in building lasting peace. In this way, memory serves as a bridge between history and peace education, enabling future generations to learn not only from experiences of suffering but also from stories of resilience and hope.



△ A house symbolising the hardships and resilience of displaced families.

My experience as a peace educator has further enriched this understanding. Through my work with students, teachers and communities, I encourage dialogue, critical reflection and engagement with historical memory. These experiences have strengthened my conviction that education is one of the most powerful tools for peacebuilding. It enables people to transform painful histories into opportunities for empathy, justice and positive social change.

To truly learn from history, we must not only remember the past but also draw lessons from it to help prevent future conflict. When young people are taught about human rights, human dignity and the consequences of violence, they are better equipped to reject violence and promote peaceful coexistence.

Peace is not a final destination but an ongoing process that demands continuous commitment and care. Even where armed conflict has ended, inequalities, social divisions, misunderstandings and unresolved grievances can continue to threaten social harmony. In an increasingly interconnected and rapidly changing world, new tensions can emerge at any time, reminding us that peace must be actively nurtured and protected.

Individuals play a vital role in sustaining peace through their everyday actions. Simple practices such as showing respect, listening to others and choosing dialogue over confrontation help build trust within families, schools and communities. Cultivating empathy enables people to understand perspectives and experiences different from their own, while a commitment to justice helps ensure that all people are treated with dignity and fairness.

“…education is one of the most powerful tools for peacebuilding. It enables people to transform painful histories into opportunities for empathy, justice and positive social change.”



△ Students from Saint Paul Methodist School creating drawings inspired by their observations at the Chega! Museum.

Communities also share a responsibility for promoting peace. Through education, cultural activities, public dialogue and collective remembrance, communities can strengthen social cohesion and help prevent old divisions from resurfacing. By working together, they create inclusive spaces where diversity is respected, mutual understanding is encouraged, and healing and reconciliation can flourish. In this way, peace becomes more than an aspiration; it becomes a shared practice, sustained through collective effort and commitment across generations.

Foundations for the Future

The memories I carry are more than personal experiences. They are enduring reminders of how peace is built through understanding, respect, empathy, dialogue, justice and reconciliation. They have taught me that peace is not something we simply inherit; it is something we learn, nurture and practise in our daily lives.

Reflecting on these experiences reaffirms the profound connection between memory and peace. Whether personal or collective, memories help us understand the human cost of conflict and the importance of living with dignity, respect and harmony. By preserving and reflecting on these memories, we transform them into lessons that guide our actions and strengthen our commitment to building peaceful communities.

As a peace educator, I carry these lessons into my work with the youth. I believe that learning about history, memory and human dignity can help them appreciate the value of peace and recognise their responsibility in protecting it. Education has the power to transform memory into wisdom, enabling history to serve not merely as a record of the past but as a guide for creating a more just and peaceful future.

I also carry a message of hope for future generations. May they learn from the experiences of the past – not from its fear and divisions, but from its wisdom, resilience and compassion. May they continue to build a world in which memory is not a burden but a source of healing, learning and inspiration. And may the peace they create be rooted in what we remember, what we teach and what we choose to carry forward, so that future generations can live in a world shaped by understanding, justice and lasting peace.

MORE THAN A MEAL: THE CULTURAL POWER OF PILAF IN UZBEKISTAN

From daily sustenance to ceremonial centrepiece, pilaf reflects centuries of tradition, identity and communal life across Uzbek society.

By Adhamjon Ashirov (Professor, Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan)



△ A man holds a plate of pilaf.

The Uzbeks are a Central Asian people distinguished by long-standing traditions of statehood and a rich material and spiritual culture. Uzbek cuisine forms an important part of this national heritage, reflecting many of its defining characteristics. Its dishes and culinary traditions have developed alongside the people's history, shaped by their patterns of economic life, natural and geographical setting, and ethnic customs.

Over the centuries, Uzbek culinary culture has been enriched through the integration of settled agriculture and animal husbandry. Cultural exchanges along the Great Silk Road also played a significant role in shaping the national cuisine.



△ Large-scale pilaf preparation is often done by men.

Characteristics of Uzbek Cuisine

The development of agriculture in Turan, regarded as the historical homeland of the Uzbeks, created favourable conditions for the widespread consumption of grains, vegetables and fruits. At the same time, livestock breeding ensured that meat and dairy products assumed a prominent role in the national diet. As a result, traditional Uzbek cuisine is characterised by the extensive use of rice, wheat, lamb, beef, carrots, onions, chickpeas and a variety of spices. These ingredients form the foundation of the country's culinary tradition.

In Uzbek society, traditional foods serve not only as a source of sustenance but also as an integral element of ritual life. Unlike everyday meals, ritual dishes function as key components of customary practices and are often shared within the community. Particular significance is attached to ceremonial foods prepared during seasonal transitions such as the New Year or the end of the harvest season. Ritual foods also play an important role in economic life, as the first products of crop cultivation, fruit harvesting, or the processing of milk and dairy products are often consumed ceremonially.

What is Pilaf?

Pilaf (*osh*) is widely regarded as the country's most cherished dish and the symbol of Uzbek national cuisine. It is prepared from relatively simple ingredients, including rice, meat, carrots, onions, spices and water. The process begins by heating vegetable or cottonseed oil in a cast-iron cauldron, after which onions and meat are fried. Carrots are then added to produce *zirvak*, the richly flavoured base. Rice is subsequently incorporated and steamed. In essence, the preparation of pilaf involves three key stages: frying, simmering and steaming.

Pilaf is consumed both as an everyday meal and as a ceremonial dish. It occupies a central place at weddings, celebrations marking a return from pilgrimage, childbirth ceremonies, anniversaries, funeral gatherings and charitable events. Today, more than 100 varieties and recipes of pilaf are recognised in Uzbekistan and beyond. Specialists who prepare pilaf professionally are known as *oshpaz* (master cooks). The craft is traditionally passed down through a master-apprentice system, continuing across generations.

Following Uzbekistan's independence, pilaf has emerged as a key marker of national identity. It is widely promoted as a symbol of cultural heritage for international visitors and occupies a prominent place in the country's tourism sector. As a result, specialised 'Pilaf Centres' have become increasingly popular across Uzbekistan: more than ten such establishments can be found in Tashkent alone.

Regional Variations in Pilaf Preparation

Each region of Uzbekistan has developed its own distinctive approach to preparing pilaf. In Tashkent, festive varieties such as *Bayram Oshi* (festival pilaf) and *Toy Oshi* (wedding pilaf) are particularly popular. In Andijan, cooks often serve the dish alongside *kovatok*, a stuffed grape-leaf preparation. In Khiva, a lighter version of pilaf known as *chalov* is served.

Pilaf recipes across the country vary according to both ingredients and cooking techniques. Tashkent pilaf, for example, is distinguished by the inclusion of chickpeas, raisins, generous quantities of carrots and *qazi* (horsemeat sausage). Samarkand pilaf is renowned for being prepared with linseed oil and for its distinctive method of layering ingredients, rather than mixing them during cooking.

In the Fergana Valley, pilaf is typically characterised by its rich brown colour, although preparation methods vary from city to city. The Kokand style, for instance, differs from Andijan's version made with *devzira* rice, as well as from Namangan's spicier variation. Pilaf from Surkhandarya and Kashkadarya contains comparatively larger proportions of meat and animal fat. Khorezm pilaf is notable for its particular balance of rice and meat, while Bukhara's *sofaki* pilaf is distinguished by its generous use of spices.

In Samarkand, Bukhara, Navoi and many areas of the Khorezm oasis, a variety known as white pilaf (*oq palov*) is widely prepared. This type is characterised by the use of yellow carrots, the preservation of the rice's natural colour, and the practice of serving the rice separately from the *zirvak*, rather than mixing the two. Another distinguishing feature is the absence of additional animal fat, as the fat naturally present in the meat is considered sufficient. Samarkand pilaf is further noted for the relatively large size of the yellow carrot slices used in its preparation. These carrots contain more carbohydrates than red or orange varieties and therefore lend a sweeter flavour to the dish.

At weddings and ceremonial gatherings in Bukhara, *sofi palov* (*oshi sofi*, in Tajik) is traditionally prepared. Unlike many other varieties, it is cooked in a copper cauldron, whose narrow opening and broad interior ensures even cooking and prevent the ingredients from burning at the base. Careful attention is also paid to maintaining precise ingredient ratios. For example, approximately six kilograms of meat, six kilograms of carrots and one kilogram of raisins are used for every ten kilograms of rice to achieve a balanced flavour.

Pilaf Culture

According to Uzbek tradition, pilaf has evolved into a social phenomenon that brings people together and strengthens communal bonds. In most households, it is prepared at least once a week, and often several times. The dish is accorded particular respect, with efforts made to ensure that all family members share it together. Guests visiting an Uzbek home are almost invariably served pilaf, and it is also prepared whenever close friends gather.

Pilaf features prominently at family celebrations, communal work gatherings (*hashar*), festivals and public festivities. Regardless of where it is prepared or the quantities involved, its preparation is typically a collective endeavour. One person peels the onions, others wash the rice, while another prepares the *shakarob*, a traditional salad commonly served alongside the dish. For weddings and large public celebrations, special gatherings



△ Tashkent pilaf is characterised by the inclusion of chickpeas, raisins, generous quantities of carrots and horsemeat sausage.



△ Consumption of pilaf is a communal affair.

known as *sabzi archar* (carrot-peeling gatherings) are organised to prepare the large quantities of carrots required. These occasions often evolve into significant social events in their own right.

Distinct gender roles are traditionally associated with the preparation of pilaf. Large quantities prepared for weddings, ceremonial events, restaurants, cafés and teahouses are typically cooked by men, while smaller family meals are generally prepared by women. This division reflects the considerable physical labour involved in preparing pilaf on a large scale. In addition, traditional *Nahorgi Osh* (morning pilaf) gatherings held in connection with weddings, funerals and anniversary commemorations are attended exclusively by men.

Both the preparation and consumption of pilaf are regarded as a distinctive cultural practice. Pilaf prepared for communal occasions is traditionally served on large platters, shared by several people seated around a common tablecloth (*dasturkhon*). It is therefore customary for two, three or even five individuals to eat from the same dish. The widespread belief that sharing food from a common platter fosters social cohesion further reinforces this practice. When pilaf is served, the eldest members of the gathering customarily begin eating first, followed by the others.

More than a Meal

Among Uzbeks, pilaf is not merely a food but a significant cultural phenomenon, expressing traditions of hospitality, collectivism, and family and national values. For this reason, it forms an essential part of both family and communal ceremonies.

During the 20th century, Uzbek cuisine underwent significant transformation, with culinary traditions – particularly festive cooking – gaining increasing cultural prominence. Pilaf, long regarded as a source of national pride and a hallmark of Uzbek gastronomy, became an increasingly recognisable cultural symbol in the era of globalisation. As a result, it has evolved into an emblem of the nation and an integral part of its cultural heritage and social life. In recognition of its significance, in 2016, the tradition of preparing and sharing Uzbek pilaf was inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Pilaf is the product of centuries of cultural development among the Uzbek people. It reflects key aspects of their economic life, patterns of labour, traditions of hospitality and systems of social relations. Its central role in a wide range of ceremonies and communal events underlines its enduring significance in Uzbek society.

Since Uzbekistan gained independence, pilaf has emerged as one of the principal symbols of national identity and has played an important role in preserving and promoting cultural heritage. It should therefore be regarded not merely as a national dish but as a vital element of the ethnocultural legacy of the Uzbek people.

THROUGH DIFFERENT LENSES: DISCOVERING OUR SHARED HUMANITY

A student from Korea captures the essential quality of global citizenship through the EIU Photo Class in Australia.

By Bokyeong Kim (Participant in the 22nd EIU Photo Class)



In September 2025, I had the opportunity to take part in the 22nd EIU Photo Class in Victoria, Australia. As a student from Jeju, a small island in the Republic of Korea, I left home carrying both excitement and uncertainty. At the time, I understood global issues largely as ideas to be discussed in classrooms or explored in essays. I knew that diversity, empathy and global citizenship mattered, yet they still felt distant from my everyday life.

If I were to define Global Citizenship Education (GCED) and Education for International Understanding (EIU) in a single sentence, it would be this: they are the process of learning to see the world not only through my own eyes but through the lives, emotions and perspectives of others. The EIU Photo Class made this definition real for me, not through lectures but through the simple act of looking.

Before joining the programme, I often approached the world with a certain detachment: 'If it is not my problem, I do not need to care'. This was not due to a lack of interest, but rather from inertia. However, the moment I stepped into the classroom in Victoria, surrounded by Korean participants and students from the Northern College of the Arts and Technology, something began to shift. We were not merely individuals brought together from different countries; we were young people sharing the same space, holding cameras, and trying to make sense of the world before us.

For seven days, we moved through Melbourne and across Victoria, visiting places as varied as the State Library, narrow city laneways, and the open coastline. At first, photography felt like a simple act of recording what I saw. Yet the more photographs I took, the more I realised that an image never captures reality exactly as it is: It captures a choice. Where I stood, what I chose to focus on, what I left outside the frame, and how I interpreted light and shadow revealed something about me.

This experience became the most meaningful lesson the EIU Photo Class could offer. In many programmes, students engage with diversity through discussions, but oftentimes cannot see it in action; here, we witnessed it unfold before us. Even when we stood in the same place and photographed the same subject, our images were never identical. One student focused on a person's expression, another on the geometry of a building, and another on a quiet detail most of us had overlooked. These differences were neither mistakes nor gaps to be corrected. They were evidence that each person carries a distinct way of seeing the world.

Through photography, I came to understand that engaging with others does not mean forcing everyone into the same frame. Rather, it is about recognising that my frame is not the only one. A camera taught me this lesson more honestly than words ever could. Every photograph has its limits, and every limit serves as a reminder that something always exists beyond my view. In this sense, photography became more than an artistic exercise; it became a practice in humility.

The relationships I formed during the programme deepened this realisation. On long bus journeys, we shared fragments of our everyday lives: music, school stories, jokes, and simple games when our devices ran out of battery. These moments were ordinary, and that was precisely why they mattered.

I had expected cultural exchange to take place through serious conversations about national identity or global issues. Instead, I found it in laughter, in shared playlists, and in the quiet comfort of sitting beside someone who had been a stranger only days before.

Through these experiences, I came to see that our differences do not divide us as much as I once believed. Rather, they make connections more meaningful. Just as different photographs of the same place can reveal a fuller picture, different perspectives allow us to understand the world more completely. To me, this is the essence of international understanding: not simply recognising that others are different but allowing those differences to expand the way we see.

Since returning to Korea, I have tried to carry this lesson into my everyday life. I find myself paying closer attention to the stories behind people's words and actions. I also feel a growing sense of responsibility to connect people, to share perspectives, and to create spaces where diverse voices can be seen and heard. The EIU Photo Class did not simply teach me how to take better photographs. It taught me how to look more carefully, listen more patiently, and approach the world with greater empathy.

Ultimately, the programme reshaped my understanding of global citizenship. The world is not a distant place defined by unfamiliar people and abstract problems. It is a shared space we already engage in, whether we recognise it or not. If we learn to look beyond our own frame, we may begin to see others not as strangers, but as individuals whose perspectives help to complete our own.

For me, the EIU Photo Class was not simply about capturing images. It was about learning how to see. And perhaps that is where true global citizenship begins: with the willingness to look again and look more closely.

Dr Jong-Hun Kim Begins Tenure as APCEIU's Eighth Director



The Minister of Education of the Republic of Korea, Mr Kyo-jin Choi, appointed Dr Jong-Hun Kim as the eighth Director of the Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding under the auspices of UNESCO (APCEIU) on 10 June, following consultations with the Director-General of UNESCO, Mr Khaled El-Enany.

Director Kim has been part of APCEIU since its founding. Upon taking up his new role, he stated, 'At a time when nationalism is spreading worldwide and democracy is under threat in many parts of the world, APCEIU will stand with global citizens to counter these trends, safeguard democracy, foster a culture of peace, and serve as a hub of solidarity and cooperation in building a world where we can live together in harmony.' He also shared his aspirations for the organisation, adding, 'I am committed to further advancing APCEIU as a globally recognised centre of excellence in Global Citizenship Education (GCED), contributing to the needs and aspirations of people around the globe.'

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APCEIU Publications Spotlight: How GCED Can Shape a Changing World

APCEIU has published four new resources to support the effective implementation of Global Citizenship Education (GCED) across diverse educational contexts:

- ***Addressing Hate Speech through Global Citizenship Education: A Handbook for Educators,*** published by UNESCO and developed with the support of APCEIU, provides a practical framework for using education to counter hate speech.
- ***Democracy in the Post-Truth Crisis: The Role of Global Citizenship Education,*** launched in collaboration with the UNESCO Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development (MGIEP), builds upon key insights from the 10th International Conference on GCED.
- ***Learning Global Citizenship through Morocco's World Heritage: A Teacher's Guide,*** co-developed with the Foundation for the Safeguarding of the Cultural Heritage of Rabat, leverages Morocco's cultural heritage to explore core civic values such as diversity and sustainability.
- ***Supporting Change in Practice: Case Studies on the Use of the ACER APCEIU Global Citizenship Education Monitoring Toolkit*** highlights real-world applications of the GCED evaluation tool co-developed with the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER).

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Uzbekistan Reviews Curriculum Framework to Boost GCED Integration



The Review Workshop on the Draft Curriculum Framework and Progression for the GCED Curriculum Development and Integration (CDI) Project in Uzbekistan was held from 26 to 27 March in Tashkent. Co-organised by APCEIU, the Ministry of Preschool and School Education and the Republican Education Centre, the workshop convened 30 core project members to identify key directions for integrating GCED into the national curriculum of Uzbekistan.

Uzbekistan is currently in the second year of a three-year initiative to embed GCED principles across its curriculum. The project is part of APCEIU's flagship GCED CDI Project, which supports member states in strengthening curriculum design and classroom practice. The outcomes of the workshop will provide a solid foundation for the next phase of Uzbekistan's CDI work and build teacher capacity for effective classroom implementation.

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Morocco Accelerates Efforts to Build a Framework for GCED Implementation



In partnership with the Ministry of National Education, Preschool and Sports of Morocco and the Mohammed VI Foundation for Environmental Protection, APCEIU co-organised a GCED Capacity-Building Workshop on 29 June in Rabat, Morocco.

This workshop was organised as a part of the GCED CDI Project in Morocco. Approximately 30 participants attended the event, creating four major draft outputs that function as a comprehensive framework to support the integration of GCED into educational policy, curriculum, teacher professional development, and classroom practice and student assessment.

As Morocco enters the final year of the GCED CDI Project, the stakeholders in Morocco will revise and finalise the four key outputs by the end of 2026, incorporating recommendations generated during the workshop.

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Asia-Pacific Training Workshop Reframes GCED's Future



From 27 April to 1 May, APCEIU hosted the 25th Asia-Pacific Training Workshop on Education for International Understanding (EIU) and Global Citizenship Education (GCED) in Seoul and the DMZ Peace Life Valley, in Gangwon, Korea.

Marking its 25th anniversary, APCEIU organised the workshop as an advanced-level programme under the theme 'Empowering Educators to Deepen GCED Practice in a Rapidly Changing World'. Twenty-six educators from 18 UNESCO member states across the Asia-Pacific region gathered to critically reflect on how to expand and enhance their GCED practice in an era of rapid change.

Throughout the five-day programme, participants engaged in a series of sessions and contemplative dialogues on themes including deepening GCED practice, GCED and AI, and reflections on conflict, division, peace and coexistence through the lens of the Korean DMZ.

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12th Youth Leadership Workshop Empowers Young Peacebuilders Through Media and the Arts



APCEIU, in partnership with the UNESCO Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development (MGIEP) and the GCED Youth Network, organised the 12th Youth Leadership Workshop on GCED.

Held from 8 to 12 June under the theme 'Translating Peace into Action: Leveraging Media and the Arts for Youth Advocacy', the workshop invited 40 participants from 30 countries to explore creative and impactful approaches to peacebuilding.

During the programme, young leaders developed strategies for promoting peace from a youth perspective and created individual action plans to implement in their home communities. Afterwards, 10 participants will refine, strengthen and carry out their initiatives through APCEIU's Mentorship and Grant Programme.

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Revamped and Relaunched UNESCO Clearinghouse



APCEIU has completed a comprehensive overhaul of the UNESCO Clearinghouse on Global Citizenship Education and officially relaunched the platform.

The upgraded website, developed in collaboration with UNESCO, features strengthened security and system reliability, improved accessibility and compatibility across desktop and mobile devices, and a redesigned user interface that enables more intuitive navigation and effective use of resources.

The redesigned Clearinghouse is accessible at https://gcedclearinghouse.org/

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Post-Programme Workshop Highlights Key Takeaways from Korean Exchange Teachers

From 11 to 13 February, nineteen Korean



exchange teachers who had been dispatched to Indonesia, Lao PDR, the Philippines and Thailand in the second half of 2025 convened for their Post-Programme Workshop and Final Presentation at APCEIU and The Link Seoul.

The three-day gathering featured guest lectures, case study presentations and small-group reflection sessions, all designed for participants to discuss their changing perspectives and insights gained across different contexts.

During the Final Presentation, which took place on 12 February, teachers showcased their activities and GCED practices implemented in partner schools. Approximately 50 participants attended the event, including officials from provincial and metropolitan offices of education and representatives from the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Korea.

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Teachers from Four Asian Countries Settle into Educational Journeys in Korea



In April, 34 teachers from Cambodia, Lao PDR, the Philippines and Thailand started their three-month educational exchange activities as part of the Asia-Pacific Teacher Exchange for Global Education (APTE) programme. Following Local Adjustment Training from 20 to 24 April, their activities in Korea officially commenced with a welcoming ceremony on 24 April. The educators were subsequently assigned to 17 elementary and secondary schools across Korea, where they will conduct subject-integrated classes and cultural exchange activities.

This year's cohort brings regionally diverse perspectives, substantial teaching experience and strong language skills, while promoting diversity, intercultural understanding and practical educational exchange outcomes across national contexts.

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Cambodia's GCED Hub Drives Better Training for Teachers



From 4 to 6 April, the GCED Cooperation Centre in Cambodia (GCC-Cambodia), based at the National Institute of Education under the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS), co-organised a three-day workshop with APCEIU in Kampong Chhnang Province.

The workshop brought together 40 high school principals from 22 provinces alongside members of the GCC-Cambodia Steering Committee, GCED trainers and resource persons from APCEIU.

The workshop aimed to advance the mainstreaming of GCED within teacher education and training across Cambodia. To date, GCC-Cambodia has reached approximately 1,700 stakeholders—including teachers, trainers, inspectors, school principals, MoEYS leaders and policymakers—since its inception.

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GCC Directors' Meeting Reaffirms Common Commitment to Advancing GCED



From 9 to 11 June, the GCC Directors' Meeting 2026 was held in Bangkok, Thailand. Organised by APCEIU and hosted by the GCED Cooperation Centre (GCC) SEAMEO SEPS, it brought together representatives from GCCs in seven countries as well as relevant institutions and partner organisations.

The meeting provided a valuable platform for GCC participants to share progress, exchange perspectives, and align on future strategies—strengthening the long-term sustainability of the Centres and deepening collaboration with APCEIU. It also proved to be a valuable space for participants to reaffirm their commitment to advance GCED across the Asia-Pacific Region.

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FISHERS COLLECT CLAMS DURING LOW TIDE ON GETBOL, KOREAN TIDAL FLATS.
THE 15TH UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE OF THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA WAS EXTENDED SUBSTANTIALLY AT THE 48TH SESSION OF THE WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE IN BUSAN.
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