

UPF Australia Hosts IAAP Webinar on Humanitarian Leadership

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Melbourne, Australia – The International Association of Academicians for Peace (IAAP) and UPF-Asia Pacific hosted a webinar on August 15, 2026, commemorating World Humanitarian Day, bringing together humanitarian leaders and peace advocates to reflect on the meaning of service and leadership. The program's themes highlighted serving others, protecting human dignity, and empowering communities to build a more peaceful and resilient world.

To open the program, **Dr. John Bellavance**, Asia Pacific coordinator for IAAP, shared a powerful example of hospital cleaners who went beyond their formal responsibilities. They adapted their routine to avoid disturbing family members who were sleeping while waiting for news of loved ones, and found ways to provide comfort and companionship to patients who had no visitors. Their actions demonstrated compassion, courage, empathy, humility and selflessness – the qualities that give humanitarian service its deeper meaning.

The keynote presentation by **Dr. Joseph Masika**, a physician, public health specialist and global humanitarian leader, explored the concept of leadership through his more than 45 years of experience. He emphasized two fundamental principles: leadership when lives are at stake and leadership through service. He identified courage, compassion, integrity, coordination and accountability as essential qualities of effective humanitarian leaders.

Dr. Masika highlighted his involvement in global polio eradication efforts across Africa and India, as well as humanitarian responses during the 1994 Rwandan genocide. His experiences demonstrated the close relationship between global health and humanitarian action, including emergency healthcare, vaccination, nutrition, mental health, clean water and sanitation, and continuity of essential services.

A central message was that affected communities must not be treated merely as recipients of assistance. Humanitarian workers should listen to local people, include diverse voices, build local capacity and share leadership so communities can sustain solutions after international workers leave.

The webinar concluded with a renewed call to protect humanitarian workers, uphold international humanitarian law, strengthen global health cooperation and empower local communities. Above all, participants were reminded that living for the sake of others can transform humanitarian service into a source of meaning, hope and peace.