



Global Highlights

Every Voice Matters for Change



Some voices begin as whispers.

Others emerge after years of silence.

But every story in this edition reminds us that lasting peace begins when people find the courage to speak, to listen, and to help others be heard.

Jihyang Kim grew up in a place where curiosity was discouraged and independent thought could come at a tremendous cost. Today, after escaping North Korea and becoming a Fulbright scholar, she is using her voice to advocate for the freedom to think, learn, and choose.

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Every Child Has A Story to Tell

The journey toward peace often begins with imagination. Through stories, poems, and drawings, Paraguayan children are discovering that imagining peace is the first step toward building it.

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Some voices are shaped by the moments we choose to serve.

For these young peacebuilders in Nepal, leadership began with serving others. As they shared their knowledge, supported vulnerable families, and encouraged their communities, they discovered that every act of service gives hope a stronger voice.

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The Power to Think: North Korean Escapee, Jihyang Kim’s Journey beyond Control to finding her Voice

Wairimu Mwangi
May 14, 2026

At a recent “Voices from North Korea” event hosted by the Alliance for Korea United at the University of Washington, Jihyang Kim, a North Korean escapee and a 2025 to 2027 Fulbright scholar pursuing graduate studies in curriculum and instruction at the University of Illinois Chicago, shared a story that was both deeply personal and profoundly unsettling. This wasn’t because of dramatic moments alone, but of what it revealed about something most people rarely question: the ability to think freely.

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She began with a simple but piercing question: *What would it feel like if every thought you had was already decided for you?* For

Jihyang, this was the reality of her childhood in North Korea. In school, learning did not involve curiosity or exploration. Students repeated what was written on the board, word for word. Questions were not asked, not because everything was understood, but because thinking differently was not permitted. Over time, she came to realize that thinking itself did not feel like something she created. It felt like something she received, like food rations distributed to sustain life but never to inspire it.

Jihyang grew up in Hyesan, a small city along the Yalu River that separates North Korea from China. From her home, she could see lights shining brightly across the border at night. They were close enough



Jihyang Kim speaking at the AKU “Voices from North Korea” event at the University of Washington.

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to spark curiosity, yet distant enough to remain unreachable. As a child, she wondered what life looked like on the other side: what people did, how they lived, and why their world seemed so different. That curiosity, at first innocent, gradually deepened into something more urgent as she grew older.

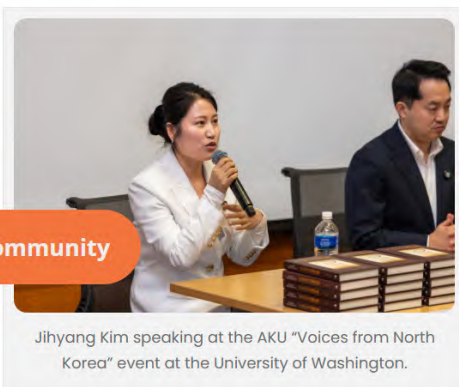
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In 2009, a nationwide currency reform wiped out the value of people's savings almost overnight. For Jihyang and her family, like many others, it meant sudden hardship and hunger. The gap between what she had been taught and what she experienced became impossible to ignore. Curiosity was no longer just about wanting to see another world; it became about survival and the need to understand whether a different life was possible.

At the age of 15, she began attempting to escape. It took four tries. On her third attempt, she was caught in China and forcibly returned to North Korea. What followed was a detention experience that exposed the harsh realities of the system she had grown up in. She was held in a small, overcrowded room with more than twenty others, under constant surveillance. Food was scarce, and movement was tightly controlled. Even the most basic human needs were stripped of dignity. Cameras monitored every action, including the use of the restroom, leaving her feeling so exposed that she sometimes chose not to eat to avoid it altogether. For 26 days, she endured conditions that reflected not just physical hardship but a deeper erosion of human rights and personal autonomy.



Jihyang Kim speaking at the AKU "Voices from North Korea" event at the University of Washington.

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Despite the risks, she eventually succeeded in escaping and made her way to South Korea. There, she encountered something

entirely unfamiliar; not material comfort, but the expectation of choice. People asked her what she wanted to do, what she wanted to study, and why. These were questions she had never been invited to consider before. At first, she found them confusing. She had spent her life learning how to repeat answers, not how to form them. The process of thinking for herself felt foreign, even overwhelming.

Gradually, however, that unfamiliar space became a place of growth. She began to understand education not as memorization, but as a tool for empowerment. It was no longer about absorbing information; it was about learning how to question, interpret, and imagine. For Jihyang, education became the pathway through which she could reclaim her voice, something she had never fully possessed before.

Today, as a Fulbright scholar studying curriculum and instruction, she is committed to using education to support others, particularly students from marginalized and disadvantaged backgrounds. Her work reflects a belief shaped by her own experience: that education holds a dual power. It can be used to

control, as she witnessed in her early life, but it can also be used to liberate. The difference lies in whether it encourages obedience or critical thinking.

Jihyang's story is not simply about escaping a life of oppression, but is about the transformation from silence to self-expression, from imposed identity to self-determination. It challenges common assumptions about freedom by highlighting something often overlooked: the ability to think, question, and choose is not universal. For millions, it remains restricted.

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In sharing her journey, she also redefines what it means to move forward. Her goal is not only personal success, but the empowerment of others who have experienced similar limitations. She envisions a future where North Korean escapees are recognized as individuals capable of leadership, contribution, and change.

Her closing words returned to the question she posed at the beginning, but this time directed outward. *What will you do with your voice?* It is a question that lingers, inviting reflection not only on her story, but on the freedoms many take for granted.

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Her journey is a powerful reminder that a future of freedom and dignity for all Koreans is possible, and it begins with a shared vision. The Korean Dream calls on people around the world to support peaceful reunification grounded in human rights, shared identity, and the ideal of benefiting all humanity. Join the [One Korea Global Campaign](#) movement to raise awareness, advocate for change, and stand in solidarity with those still seeking the freedom to think, choose, and live with dignity.

Disclaimer: This story has been adapted from Jihyang Kim's testimony shared during the "Voices from North Korea" event hosted by the Alliance for Korea United at the University of Washington in April, 2026. The content has been edited for clarity, flow, and storytelling purposes while preserving the integrity of her experience.

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Young Voices Shine at the Second “Narrating Peace” Literary Awards

Mar Martinez Puig
December 8, 2025



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Students and teachers join Global Peace Foundation representatives during the award ceremony of the second “Narrating Peace” Literary Contest in Asunción.

Students, teachers, and families gathered on Friday, December 5, 2025, to celebrate the winners of the Second “Narrating Peace” Literary Contest, an initiative of the Global Peace Foundation that encourages children to explore the meaning of peace through creativity and imagination.

Held at the foundation’s headquarters, the ceremony welcomed students from preschool and elementary levels who participated with short stories, poems, reflective phrases, and drawings. Seventeen students participated in this year’s edition, each offering a unique interpretation of peace and its various expressions in daily life.



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Young writers and artists pose following the awards ceremony of the second “Narrating Peace” contest.

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The event opened in an atmosphere of joy and anticipation, with parents and teachers looking on. A panel of judges, comprising Graciela Ferreira, Chony Calderón, and Lidia Edit Amarilla, evaluated the submissions based on creativity, style, message, and clarity. Several selected works were read aloud during the ceremony, giving the audience a glimpse into the depth and sincerity of the participants’ perspectives.

Sofía Valquiria Gómez and Fabrizio Ortigoza earned first place, followed by Leryn Dahiane Benítez in second, and Sebastián Matto in third. All participants received medals and certificates recognizing their effort, while the winners were awarded books by Paraguayan authors, chosen to inspire them on their creative journeys.

A special highlight of the morning was the formal presentation of books to the 2024 winners, fulfilling a commitment made during the contest’s first edition. The gesture underscored the foundation’s continued dedication to nurturing young talent and honoring the voices of every participant.



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Ortigoza, the driving force behind the project, together with her team, including Graciela Ferreira, Lidia Edit Amarilla, and Choni Calderón, moments before presenting the medals.

The celebration concluded with group photos and words of gratitude from the Global Peace Foundation, highlighting the transformative power of artistic expression in fostering a culture of peace within schools and communities.

By giving children a platform to share their stories and ideas, the “Narrating Peace” contest has become a meaningful space for learning, reflection, and unity. The enthusiastic involvement of students, the support of families, and the engagement of educators demonstrate the growing impact of this initiative, which is steadily becoming a cherished tradition in the educational and cultural landscape.

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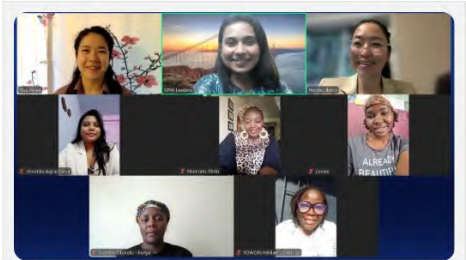
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Ordinary Women, Extraordinary Voices: GPW Korean Dream Study Series Builds a Global Movement for Peace

Wairimu Mwangi

September 16, 2025



Women leaders participate in an online study series on the Korean Dream.

Across time zones and borders, a growing circle of women leaders is engaging with a powerful

idea: that the future of peace lies not only in politics or policies, but in people; ordinary people, doing extraordinary things in their families and communities.

This belief comes to life in the Korean Dream Study Series, a learning and leadership platform organized by Global Peace Women (GPW). In its fourth session in July 2025, themed “People Power and Peaceful Revolutions,” participants from Kenya, Nigeria, Malawi, Bangladesh, Nepal, and other countries came together online to share stories, reflect on history, and connect the ideals of the Korean Dream to their own lives and local contexts.

“It’s truly amazing to see each of you, so busy with your community work, yet here with heart and vision,” said the session’s host, Tahmina Supti. “This is not just a class; it’s a collective journey toward peace.”

A Global Conversation Rooted in Local Realities

From the outset, the session spotlighted the unique ways participants are advancing peace in their own communities. Muniratu Jibrin shared how she is leading Korean Dream campaigns

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among rural farmers in northern Nigeria, adapting to limited digital access by mobilizing volunteer coordinators to register community members and share the message of peace through face-to-face engagement.

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With schools going on holiday, Muniratu and fellow leader Aisha are planning vibrant summer boot camps for children and parents, using art, local languages, and storytelling to promote peace values and the Korean Dream. “We want to catch them before they get lost in holiday routines,” she said. “It’s a moment to sow seeds of peace in young hearts.”

Everline Obondo from Kenya brought history into the room with her reflection on Nobel laureate Wangari Maathai, who stood alongside mothers of political prisoners in peaceful protest. “She could have stayed home,” Everline noted, “but she chose to use her voice to push for justice. It shows us that whatever we have, our voices and our stories, we can use them for peace.”

Shristika Bajracharya of Nepal shared how her project, conducted through GPW, supported elderly women abandoned by their families by helping them create handmade products and connect to markets. “From being silent about their needs to becoming financially independent, we saw a shift,” she said. “And it all started with listening.”

Milliam Chilemba from Malawi told the story of a young woman born with HIV who used TikTok to destigmatize her status, teach others how to live positively, and create community among other youth facing the same challenge. Her courage to speak out, despite criticism, sparked a cultural shift towards mental health and acceptance.

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From Bangladesh, one participant recounted how a student group rallied support for a university caretaker who had lost his job during the COVID-19 lockdown. “It was a small act,” she said. “But it helped a family survive, and inspired others to do the same.”

Linnes from Malawi shared how her college class raised funds for a struggling peer, an initiative that grew and inspired other groups. “It started small, but it showed us how kindness multiplies,” she said.

Together, these stories created a mosaic of leadership, not in official titles, but in acts of service, courage, and compassion.

Learning from the Past, Leading with Vision

The session also connected these lived experiences to historical movements of peaceful revolution. Participants reflected on how the Korean independence movement of 1919, Mahatma Gandhi’s nonviolent resistance in India, and the American civil rights movement were all led by ordinary people driven by moral vision.

“What these movements had in common,” said instructor Risa Perea, “was not just a demand for

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change, but a clear vision grounded in values. That’s what made the revolutions not only peaceful, but transformational.”

Participants learned how faith communities, and youth played pivotal roles in nonviolent action, and how those lessons remain relevant today.

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“It only takes a spark,” added GPW President Hanako Ikeno, drawing from a recent fire safety conversation in her home. “That spark can destroy or it can inspire. Our daily choices, our conversations, and our small acts carry the power to ignite change.”

The Korean Dream: A Vision That Unites

At the heart of the study series is the [Korean Dream](#), a vision articulated by Dr. Hyun Jin Preston Moon, calling for a peaceful, unified Korea built on shared spiritual heritage and moral ideals. But as participants explored, the dream is not confined to Korea. It’s a call to all people, everywhere, to live as One Family under God.

The Korean Dream Study Series serves as both an educational tool and a catalyst for peace. It’s a flagship program of [Global Peace Women](#), in collaboration with the Global Peace Foundation (GPF). Through interactive learning, storytelling, and community building, the series equips women and youth leaders to become moral and innovative change agents in their societies, while advancing the global vision of Korean reunification and peace rooted in shared values. It nurtures leaders who are grounded in values, connected to global struggles, and equipped to act locally.

Find out more about the [Korean Dream Study](#).

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Youth Campaign Against Electoral Violence in Nigeria Motor Parks

Global Peace Foundation
September 24, 2022

Over 50 men, women, and youth participated in an event advocating against election violence in Abuja, Nigeria, on September 22, 2022. After research showed that people living in motor parks were being targeted to join extremist groups, Global Peace Foundation (GPF) Nigeria brought together officials and members of the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW), including drivers, bus conductors, and hawkers at the Jabi Motor Park from diverse religious and backgrounds to take a stand against election violence and committing violence during the election season.

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The ongoing program “Youth Voices Against Electoral Violence” was initiated by GPF Nigeria in preparation for the upcoming 2023 elections to take place in Nigeria. Events like this one provide a platform for influential leaders to engage with their communities and show solidarity in creating peaceful societies.

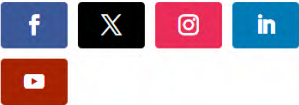
One participant at the Jabi Motor Park, Usman Hussaini, expressed the importance of such events saying, “I now understand that it is my future that is at stake, so I will do everything I can to resist any offer to participate in electoral violence.”

Organizers plan to host similar events leading up to the 2023 general elections.

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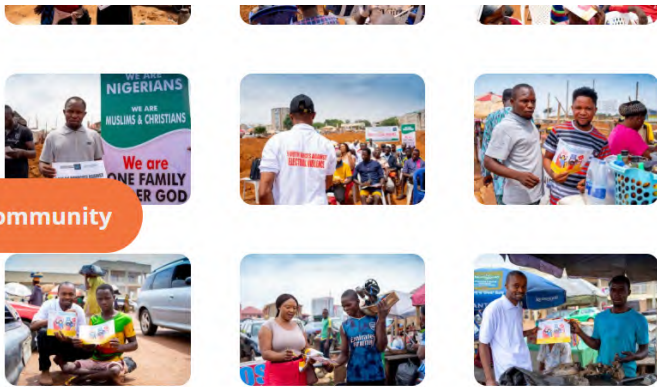
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Global Leaders Gather in Costa Rica to Address Religious Freedom in Changing Times

Paul Murray
October 2, 2024

San José, Costa Rica—As societal values and norms continue to shift at a rapid pace, the issue of religious freedom is becoming increasingly pressing worldwide. This was the core message delivered by Dr. Paul Murray, International Vice President of Religious Freedom Initiatives at the Global Peace Foundation, at the recently concluded Impact on Religious Liberty Forum. The three-day event, hosted by Fabricio Alvarado Muñoz, Deputy of Costa Rica’s Legislative Assembly, brought together government representatives, faith leaders, and civil society from Latin America to discuss the growing challenges to religious freedom in a rapidly evolving world.

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Global Peace Foundation (GPF) has long advocated for religious liberty through its values-based peacebuilding model, which promotes universal principles of human dignity, empathy, and shared humanity. This model has laid the groundwork for initiatives worldwide that advance freedom of conscience, belief, and religion. By fostering cooperation across faith lines, GPF has enabled multilateral engagement on these issues, enhancing both domestic and international efforts to address religious liberty challenges.



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The forum, held in San José, attracted representatives from Nicaragua, Mexico, Cuba, Colombia, Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, Brazil, and the United States. The dialogue centered around the rising tensions between shifting societal norms and their encroachment, and at times forceful acceptance, contrary to deeply rooted faith or individual beliefs—particularly in regions where religious freedom is threatened or outright banned.

Dr. Murray's address emphasized that freedom of conscience and religion is the most essential human right, noting that this freedom is the "deepest expression of human dignity and freedom." During his interview with CBN Costa Rica, he explained that when this primary freedom is not respected, other human rights often follow suit and are neglected. Dr. Murray underscored the Global Peace Foundation's historical efforts in championing this cause, including education, advocacy, and peacebuilding initiatives focusing on the core values of respect for individual rights, community collaboration, and multi-faith engagement.

The Global Peace Foundation's religious freedom initiatives have had a global impact. Its peacebuilding model has united diverse faith leaders, government representatives, and civil society to protect religious freedoms. By emphasizing the importance of universal values, GPF has enabled communities to address tensions related to religious freedom, showing that religious liberty is not just a personal belief issue but a universal human right.

"Today, tragically, a stunning 83 percent of the world's population lives in nations where religious freedom is either threatened or banned," said Dr. Murray in his opening remarks to the forum. "The victims of religious persecution face economic sanctions, imprisonment, mob violence, and state-sanctioned terror. Tragically, for far too many, the ultimate price is death."

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Dr. Murray articulated how safeguarding religious freedom is not merely a matter of personal belief but a universal human right crucial to the survival of all other rights. This guiding principle fuels the Global Peace Foundation's active leadership as a co-chair of the International Religious Freedom Roundtable and partnerships with the International Religious Freedom Secretariat (IRFSec), the First Amendment Voice Alliance, and the National Committee for Religious Freedom.



Civil Discourse: A Cornerstone of Democracy

At the heart of Dr. Murray's speech was the idea that civil discourse must remain central to any functioning democracy. He argued that, as societies change, the ability to engage in respectful, empathetic communication between individuals with differing viewpoints becomes paramount.

"Civil discourse is not merely the exchange of ideas; it is the respectful, thoughtful, and empathetic communication between individuals with differing viewpoints," Murray said. "It requires us to listen as much as we speak, to understand as much as we wish to be understood."

Murray warned that the erosion of civil discourse—due to political polarization, social media-fueled echo chambers, and the imposition of ideological orthodoxy—has made it increasingly difficult for societies to address complex issues such as religious freedom. In this context, he emphasized that civil discourse serves as the cornerstone of democracy, allowing nations to balance evolving collective norms with preserving individual freedoms.

Global Challenges, Local Solutions

The challenges associated with changing norms are not limited to national borders. In today's interconnected world, the imposition of external ideologies has become a growing concern for many nations, especially when these ideologies threaten constitutional guarantees such as freedom of speech, religion, and assembly.

Murray pointed to the importance of international platforms, such as the International Religious Freedom Roundtable, which bring together diverse voices to engage in meaningful dialogue on these critical issues.

"The International Religious Freedom Roundtable serves as a vital platform where civil society—from various faith beliefs and none—can come together to discuss regional and global issues," Murray explained. "It is a space where representatives from different cultures, religions, and ideologies can engage in meaningful dialogue, share their perspectives, and seek common ground."

Murray co-chaired a Religious Freedom Roundtable alongside IRF Secretariat President and former USCIRF Commissioner Chair Nadine Maenza during the forum. The roundtable featured more than 120 participants representing governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and faith communities. The discussions emphasized the need for multi-faith networks to come together to protect religious liberty for everyone, everywhere, and at all times.

Costa Rica: A Beacon of Democracy and Human Rights

Costa Rica's role as the forum's host was particularly fitting, given the country's long-standing commitment to peace, democracy, and human rights. Murray praised Costa Rica for its leadership in

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rights. Murray praised Costa Rica for its leadership on the international stage and for its commitment to upholding religious freedom within its borders.

“Costa Rica, with its rich history of peace, democracy, and respect for human rights, has a significant role to play in the global dialogue,” Murray said. “By participating in the International Religious Freedom Roundtable, Costa Rica places itself at the table alongside other nations committed to protecting these fundamental rights.”

He added that Costa Rica’s participation sends a powerful message to the world: that even small nations can significantly impact the global effort to uphold human rights and religious freedom. By reaffirming its constitutional guarantees of freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, Costa Rica strengthens its democracy and the broader international community’s resolve to protect these rights for all.

A Call for Collaboration

As the forum drew to a close, the participants agreed that the path forward would require domestic and international efforts to protect religious freedom in a rapidly changing world. While societal values will inevitably continue to shift and compete against freedom of conscience, belief, and religion, Murray emphasized that such shifts should not become weapons to attack the inalienable rights that every individual has—a right that no government, group, or individual can prohibit.

“The question we must ask ourselves is not whether societal values will continue to change—they will—but how can we navigate these changes while preserving the core freedoms that define us as individuals and as nations,” Murray said.

The forum concluded with a renewed commitment to strengthening religious freedom in Latin America and beyond. Participants expressed hope that, through cooperation and establishing a religious freedom roundtable, they could build a world where all faiths and non-faiths can be protected.

“Let us embrace this opportunity to engage in meaningful discussions, to listen to one another, and to work together in upholding the principles that form the foundation of our shared humanity,” Murray said in his closing remarks. “In doing so, we will not only protect the rights of our citizens but also help to build a more just, equitable, and free world for all.”

The Impact on Religious Liberty Forum underscored the growing need for dialogue and cooperation as global leaders seek to address the challenges posed by changing societal mores. With the continued support of platforms such as the International Religious Freedom Roundtable and values-based peacebuilding models like those pioneered by GPF, there is hope that the international community can work together to safeguard religious freedom for generations to come.

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Young Peacebuilders Share Skills during Seven-Month Nepal Leadership Practicum

Eric Olsen

February 2, 2022

The Global Peacebuilders Practicum Nepal is a seven-month program for youth to develop

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promote peace and service, and create a positive impact in their communities.

Organized by Global Peace Women Nepal and Global Peace Foundation Nepal and funded in part by the Rotary Clubs of Mercer Island and Bhadgaon, the practicum encouraged young and rising professionals to share their skills through ongoing webinars and virtual engagements.

“My passion for helping the helpless is one reason I am inspired to become a social worker,” said Aruna Poudel, a practicum participant. Aruna collaborated with the local organization Chetanshil Pratisthan to distribute hygiene kits to students and parents in her community.

Practicum Fellows also provided food relief to their communities and families through Project Samudayik Sewa, a joint effort of GPW Nepal with GPF to help families of daily wage workers and people with disabilities struggling during the Covid19 lockdown. The project has reached 366 families in 25 communities and is preparing relief for 200 more families.



Two participants of the seven-month peacebuilding practicum with certificates of completion.

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Throughout the April to November 2021 practicum, more than 20 peacebuilder Fellows were asked to organize one session each on either professional capacity building, service, or self-care. Those presenting sessions included:

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Shree Acharya, a clinical dietician, hosted a self-care session on healthy eating habits. Participants learned about maintaining a healthy, nutritious, immunity-boosting diet during the pandemic.

- Dr. Narendra Singh Thagunna, a Consultant Psychologist, facilitated sessions on mental health wellbeing.
- Sanju Baral, a scholar of the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, gave sessions on emotional management.
- Bidur Phuyal, a yoga master and motivator, gave tips on stress management during this pandemic.
- Tika Dahal, the founder, and chairperson of Nepal Disabled Women Association, encouraged peacebuilders to promote youth advocacy.
- Shristika Bajracharya, a paralegal, gave an awareness session on sexual harassment, the legal provisions against it, and steps to create a safe space for everyone.



Peacebuilder Fellows also visited two orphanages in the region of Dashain, the major harvest festival in Nepal. They spent the afternoon sharing gift boxes, letters of encouragement, and love and warmth with each individual child.

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Another peacebuilder fellow, Sonu Gyawali is providing spiritual education and awareness on selfless action, awareness, and devotion from the Bhagavat Gita, one of Hinduism's sacred texts.

On International Day of Peace, observed annually on September 21 by a unanimous UN declaration, the Fellows joined the international commemoration for peace with a video message from their collective voices.

These young peacebuilders have been given the opportunity to learn, engage, and promote peace and service in their communities through the Global Peacebuilders Program.

To find out more about the Global Peacebuilders



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To find out more about the Global Peacebuilder Practicum contact GPW Nepal's [Facebook page](#).

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