



Global Highlights

What Does It Mean to Invest in Peace?



On this International Day of Peace, the question feels personal: where do we invest our attention, trust, and choices? Peace is not sustained only through institutions or agreements. It is also shaped in the ordinary places where we have influence every day.

Peace is shaped in how families handle disagreement, what we share online, who gets heard, and whether communities build trust before tensions deepen. Those choices accumulate.

[See Where It Begins](#)



What Holds Peace Together?

Across Japan, Baltimore, Montana, and Nigeria, GPF shows how sustained relationships can turn assumptions into trust, deepen understanding across differences, and build the cooperation communities need for lasting peace.

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When Communities Own the Change

From solar lights in the Philippines to regenerative farming in Malaysia, locally led solutions endure when communities adapt, own, and carry them forward—turning participation into lasting capacity and resilience.

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A New Generation of Peacebuilders Steps Forward

Korean American youth leader Namsik Yoo calls for young people to move from observers to active participants, bringing ideas, connections, and practical solutions to conversations about peace and the Korean Peninsula's future.

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Five Ways Peace Starts Small



One conversation handled with care. One young person trusted to lead. One relationship repaired. One shared space protected. One partnership begun. None feels world-changing alone—but together, they shape communities.

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As Peace Month continues, take a moment to reflect on one action you took to strengthen peace in your family, workplace, community, or beyond. Your experience could encourage someone else to act, too.

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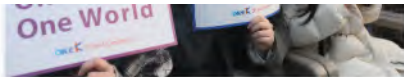
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"Peace isn't just the absence of violence or conflict, but I think it's a state where people can come to their full potential. They can feel free to be able to be creative, to be giving, and reach a higher state than what they currently are."

- Risa Perea (USA)



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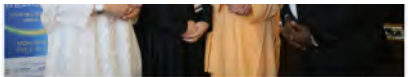
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"This was my first time attending a training like this. I was happy to sit and learn with women from other religions. We discovered we share the same family origin...We left not just with knowledge, but also with friendship and peace."

- Aisha Yusuf (Nigeria)



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Support the mentorships, networking platforms, and ongoing enrichment programs that uplift the values and dignity of women, support the development of service-minded leadership on all levels, and strengthen families.

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"This initiative has made a significant impact on the lives of our residents, especially during this season of giving. It shows how collective efforts can bring meaningful change to communities in need."

- Mayor George D. Suayan of Candelaria (Philippines)



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"Hearing stories from fellow youth around the world reminded me that peace is not just a political goal, it is something we can all contribute to through simple, collective actions."

- Devina Andreny Wongso (Indonesia)



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What Does It Mean to Invest in Peace?

Wairimu Mwangi

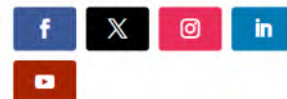
September 20, 2026

Peace shapes the quality of life in every society. It creates the conditions for people to raise families, pursue opportunities, work together, and contribute to the communities around them. When peace is present, it can be



Community leaders participate in a workshop on conflict analysis hosted by Global Peace Foundation.

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This is what makes the question “What does it mean to invest in peace?” relevant to everyone.

The United Nations’ 2026 theme for the International Day of Peace, “Invest in Peace: For Everyone, Everywhere, Every Day,” puts attention on something easy to overlook: the fact that peace requires more than a desire for an end to violence. It requires people and communities to develop the relationships, values, and capacities that make peaceful societies possible.

For most people, this does not begin with a large financial contribution or a formal peacebuilding

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program. It begins with what we choose to strengthen around us.

Peace begins with what we practice



Japanese families for Peace Begins in the Home

Consider the home. Long before children encounter political debates, social tensions, or international conflicts, they learn from the relationships around them. They watch how adults

disagree, whether apologies are offered, whether people listen to one another, and how decisions are made.

A parent who teaches a child to express frustration without insulting others is already laying a foundation for peaceful relationships. So is a family that encourages children to ask questions about people who are different from them rather than making assumptions. These seemingly ordinary experiences influence how young people understand respect, responsibility, empathy, and disagreement.

The same principle extends into the community. A disagreement between neighbors can become a lasting source of resentment, or it can become an opportunity to find common ground. A community meeting can reinforce existing divisions, or create space for people who rarely interact to work towards a shared solution. The difference often comes down to whether people are willing to invest the time and effort required to build trust.

Small choices can strengthen or weaken social cohesion

Peace is also shaped by what happens when nobody is watching.

Every day, people make decisions about what information to share,



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whose
experience
is to take
seriously,

and how to respond when confronted with opinions they disagree with. A misleading message forwarded without checking can deepen suspicion between groups. A stereotype repeated often enough can become accepted as fact. A hostile response can turn an ordinary disagreement into something much harder to repair.

The opposite is equally true. Pausing before reacting, checking information before sharing it, listening to someone with a different perspective, and refusing to reduce an entire group to a single stereotype are practical contributions to a healthier social environment.

These actions may not look like traditional peacebuilding. But they influence whether the people around us experience difference as something that can be navigated or something that must be fought over.

Communities need people who choose to participate

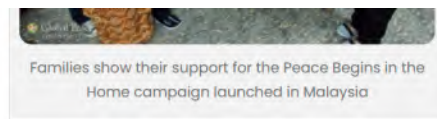


Investing in peace also involves moving beyond the expectation that someone else will solve community problems.

A young person who organizes peers around a local issue, a teacher who creates space for respectful dialogue, a neighbor who brings people together to address a shared concern, or a community leader who includes voices that are often overlooked is strengthening the ability of people to work together.

This matters because resilient communities are not defined by the absence of disagreement. They are defined by their ability to handle disagreement without allowing it to destroy relationships. That capacity does not appear automatically when a crisis begins. It develops through repeated opportunities to cooperate, communicate, and solve problems together.

Peace deserves attention before crisis demands



it

There is a practical reason to take this seriously. By the time violence erupts, the underlying problems are often much harder to address. Trust may already have broken down. Relationships may have become deeply divided. Misinformation and fear may have taken hold. Preventing that deterioration requires attention before the crisis.

For individuals, this can mean strengthening relationships and modeling constructive ways of dealing with difference. For families, it can mean raising children who understand that disagreement does not require hostility. For schools and community organizations, it can mean creating spaces where people learn to collaborate across differences. For all of us, it can mean paying greater attention to the environments we help create through our words, choices, and actions.

Where will you invest?

The 2026 UN theme offers a useful starting point because it brings peace out of the realm of

distant institutions and into everyday life.

Everyone, everywhere, every day includes the places where each of us has influence.

Look at your own sphere of influence. What happens in your home when people disagree? How are differences discussed in your workplace or community? What do you share online? Who is being left out of conversations and decisions? Where could you help create greater trust or cooperation?

Your contribution may be a conversation you choose to have, a relationship you choose to repair, a young person you choose to encourage, a community initiative you choose to support, or simply a harmful narrative you choose not to pass on.

Peace is built through choices that accumulate, so this year, rather than asking only what the world needs to do for peace, ask a more immediate question: What can I strengthen, repair, support, or change in the place where I am?



GPF Nigeria hosts peacebuilding dialogue forums to foster peace in Kaduna.

That is where investing in peace begins.

Personal action can also support the wider work of building peace. Global Peace Foundation (GPF) works alongside communities, faith leaders, and local officials to build dialogue, strengthen trust, and develop locally led approaches to addressing division and conflict. [Explore GPF's community-driven peacebuilding work](#), and consider supporting this work through a donation. Your contribution can help strengthen the local relationships, leadership, and community capacity that make lasting peace possible.

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GPF Local Affiliates Exemplify the Role of Relationships in Peacebuilding

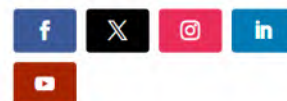
Wairimu Mwangi

September 20, 2026

"When I first met Rev. Hayab, my first thought was that I had met someone from my original family, the family of Adam and Eve."

Sheik Abdulahi Maraya was describing his first encounter with Reverend Joseph Hayab, a Christian reverend from Kaduna State, Nigeria. Today, the two are known as the "Kaduna Twins" and work together through Global Peace Foundation's (GPF) One Family under God campaign. Their friendship has brought together people from different religious and ethnic communities in a region marked by conflict. Read the GPF story, ["The Kaduna Twins: Finding Common](#)

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Their story captures an essential truth about peacebuilding: relationships can change how people

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peacebuilding. Relationships can change how people see one another. When people who have been separated by religion, ethnicity, race, or history begin to know one another personally, suspicion can give way to trust, and division can create space for cooperation.

This is why relationships are not simply an outcome of peacebuilding. They are part of how peace is built.

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Trust Grows through Sustained Engagement

Trust rarely develops in a single conversation. It grows when people have repeated opportunities to listen, challenge assumptions, and discover common ground.

GPF's Cross-Community Engagement Project in Baltimore brought varied participants together for 10 sessions over six months to examine race relations, develop empathy, and strengthen relationships. The extended engagement gave participants time to move beyond initial assumptions and develop genuine connections. Read ["Baltimore Cross-Community Engagement Project."](#)



Group photo of Baltimore Cross-Community Engagement participants

This is an important lesson for peacebuilders. Bringing divided communities into the same room is only the beginning. The real work happens when people continue meeting, listening, and working through difficult questions together.

Listening can Transform Reconciliation

Relationships also create space for people to encounter histories and experiences different from their own.

GPF's Cross-Community Reconciliation initiative in Montana brings Native American and non-Native participants together to engage with one another across historical and cultural divides. In a 2026 gathering, participants learned from Indigenous voices and shared cultural experiences, creating opportunities for understanding and connection. Read ["From Tradition to Connection: Indigenous Voices Lead Cross Community Reconciliation."](#)





Josiah Hugs, an elder of the Crow Nation (also known as Apsáalooke), leads the group in a friendship dance.

Listening does not require people to agree on everything. It creates an opportunity to understand why another person sees the world differently. When people know one another's stories, it becomes harder to reduce one another to a label.

Connection can Begin with Celebration

Relationships do not always begin with difficult conversations about conflict. Sometimes, they begin with something as simple as sharing food, music, or culture.

For more than a decade, GPF Japan's Multicultural One Family Festival has brought people from different cultural backgrounds together through performances, food, exhibitions, and activities. The festival creates opportunities for communities that might otherwise remain separate to meet and interact as individuals. Read about [GPF Japan's Multicultural One Family Festival](#).



Singer Yolanda Tasico leads a celebration at the Multicultural One Family Festival 2025 held in Japan.

This kind of engagement matters because familiarity can challenge stereotypes. When people encounter one another through shared experiences, difference becomes something to understand rather than something to fear.

From Relationships to Cooperation

The strongest relationships eventually move beyond conversation.

The Kaduna Twins demonstrate this in Nigeria. Their relationship has become a bridge between Christian and Muslim communities and a practical example of the cooperation that One Family under God seeks to encourage. Their work shows that peacebuilding becomes more credible when communities see trusted leaders demonstrating respect and partnership across religious lines.

The same principle runs through GPF's other community-driven initiatives. People are brought together not simply to talk about peace, but to develop the relationships that allow them to work together on shared concerns.

That is where relationships become a foundation for sustainable peace.

Building Peace One Relationship at a Time

Across these initiatives, the contexts are different, but the lesson is consistent.

In Kaduna, a Christian reverend and a Muslim cleric have built a friendship across a religious divide. In Baltimore, people from different racial backgrounds have developed trust through sustained engagement. In Montana, communities are creating space for reconciliation through listening and cultural understanding. In Japan, people from diverse backgrounds are building connections through shared experiences.



GPF Nigeria hosts a one-day peace conference in Kaduna.

Together, these examples reflect GPF's mission to build a culture of peace by strengthening relationships across differences. They point to a powerful idea that peace is built between people before it can be sustained between communities.

Policies can create frameworks for cooperation, and agreements can end conflict. But people still have to live together after the agreement is signed. They have to decide whether to trust, listen, cooperate, and stand against narratives that divide them.

Those choices are shaped by relationships.

Peacebuilding, therefore, is not only about bringing divided groups to the same table. It is about helping the people at that table know one another well enough to build something together.

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Why Local Ownership Matters in Community Development and Peacebuilding

Wairimu Mwangi

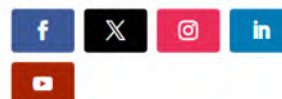
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A solar light can change what happens after sunset. A rooftop garden can change what a family eats. A new farming method can change how a village earns a living. A trusted channel between residents and police can change how a community responds to insecurity.

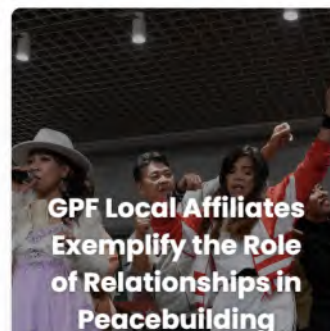
But the most significant change happens when people begin to see these solutions as theirs.

Across Global Peace Foundation's (GPF) work in communities from Tanzania and the Philippines to Malaysia and Nepal, this can be seen in what

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Volunteers and locals come together for the All-Lights Village project in Sitio

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In the Philippines, the All-Lights Village initiative began with solar lighting for communities without reliable electricity. In Sitio Tamale, Nueva Ecija, the work grew into livelihood development, including an organic mushroom production center. When the center was handed over to the community, local leaders and youth representatives [formally accepted responsibility for it and committed to its future.](#)

The significance of the handover was not simply that a building had changed hands. The community now had an asset around which it could organize economic activity and create opportunities for its members. In later All-Lights Village work, communities have continued developing livelihoods around organic farming, mushroom production, handicrafts, and small businesses while building connections with government agencies and other partners.

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The villagers of Kg. Bukit Biru are preparing lemongrass for distribution and sale.

The same approach appears in GPF's work with Orang Asli communities in Malaysia. In Kg. Bukit Biru, families who had depended on a nearby landfill after losing access to traditional sources of livelihood began exploring regenerative farming. GPF Malaysia worked with villagers to introduce [syntropic agroforestry](#), while farmers learned through practical experience on their own land. Within a year, farms were producing vegetables and fruits, and the creation of the Kebun Amai marketplace helped farmers reach customers beyond their villages.

The work has since expanded. [GPF Malaysia](#) reports that its regenerative farming initiative has reached 21 villages and trained 126 farmers, with farmers exchanging knowledge and developing new ways to process and sell their produce.





Orang Asli farmers learning about syntropic farming at A Little Wild, Kota Tinggi

What makes this significant is the knowledge that stays with the farmer. A technique learned in one field can be tested in another. A successful harvest can encourage another family to begin farming. Experience becomes something the community can share rather than something that remains with an external trainer. In Kathmandu, Nepal, the [Green Homes: Green Kathmandu](#) initiative brings this approach into the household. Families have learned rooftop gardening, rainwater harvesting, waste management, upcycling, and sustainable farming. Participants have applied these skills in their homes and businesses, turning environmental practices into everyday habits and, in some cases, additional income.



On the rooftop garden of participants of the Green Homes: Green Kathmandu program.

The initiative has continued to grow through women, students, educators, and community partners. In [2026](#), participants were learning to transform discarded materials into useful products, with many demonstrating that they could independently reproduce the products taught during training.

The value of this model is visible at the household level. A compost bin is useful because a family uses it. A rooftop garden matters because someone tends it. A new skill creates value when someone puts it into practice and teaches another person. The [EKN Project](#) in Tanzania takes the same thinking into peacebuilding. Through community policing activities, radio programs, and mobile communication, residents were connected with community mobilizers, local leaders, and police. The technology provided channels for communication, but those channels became useful because people used them to report concerns, exchange information,

and work with local authorities.



Participants at the rooftop farming training

Here, ownership means more than possessing a physical asset. It means having a role in maintaining the relationships that keep a community safe.

This has important implications for organizations working in development and peacebuilding. Their strongest contribution may not be the project that bears their name. It may be the local capacity that remains when their direct involvement becomes smaller.

GPF's community-driven approach places local stakeholders at the center of this process, working alongside communities, faith leaders, government institutions, and other partners. The organization can bring resources, technical knowledge, and connections, but communities bring something equally important: knowledge of their own circumstances and the relationships needed to make solutions work.



Participants of the EKN Project monitoring visit

That changes how success is understood. A successful livelihood project is not simply one that distributes equipment. It is one where people can operate, improve, and expand what they received. A successful environmental initiative is not simply one that delivers training. It is one where families continue the practices and share them with others. A

successful peacebuilding initiative is not simply one that convenes people. It is one where relationships continue to solve problems after the meeting is over.

Local ownership gives development its continuity. It allows a livelihood center to become a community enterprise, farming knowledge to move from one household to another, sustainable practices to spread across neighborhoods, and residents to become active partners in peace. When communities have the space to shape solutions, strengthen relationships, and carry their own ideas forward, change becomes part of the community's fabric. That is how local ownership turns participation into lasting capacity and gives peace the roots to endure.

Explore how Global Peace Foundation puts community-driven peacebuilding into practice by placing local people at the heart of building more peaceful, resilient communities: [GPF | Community-driven Peacebuilding](#)

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Korean American Youth Leader Namsik Yoo Urges Global Action for Korean Reunification

Wairimu Mwangi

September 16, 2026

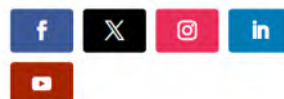
Young people have a critical role to play in shaping the future of the Korean Peninsula, and Namsik Yoo, director of youth programs at Alliance for Korea United USA, believes they must move from being observers of reunification discussions to becoming active participants in building a peaceful future. "We need to make reunification a movement in which young people directly participate and take action instead of ending with lectures or slogans," Yoo said recently in an interview with Asia Today.

Yoo envisions a global movement that brings

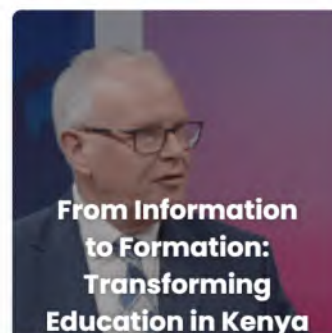
from diverse backgrounds. For him, Korean reunification is not an issue that should be addressed only through government negotiations. It is a generational responsibility and an opportunity for young people to contribute ideas, build connections and develop practical solutions for a peaceful, prosperous and unified Korean Peninsula.

His vision also reflects the values behind the Global Peace Foundation's (GPF) One Korea Global Campaign, which has promoted international support for Korean-led peaceful unification since 2010. GPF envisions a free and unified Korea

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grounded in freedom, democratic values, the rule of law, and human rights, drawing on the Korean principle of Hongik Ingan, "living for the greater benefit of humanity."

The journey toward a peaceful and unified Korea requires the commitment of people around the world. Support the One Korea Global Campaign and help advance initiatives that empower communities and young people to contribute to a free, prosperous, and unified Korea. [Support the One Korea Global Campaign.](#)

Explore the full UPI interview with Namsik Yoo to learn more about why young people must be at the heart of this movement. [Read the full article on UPI.](#)

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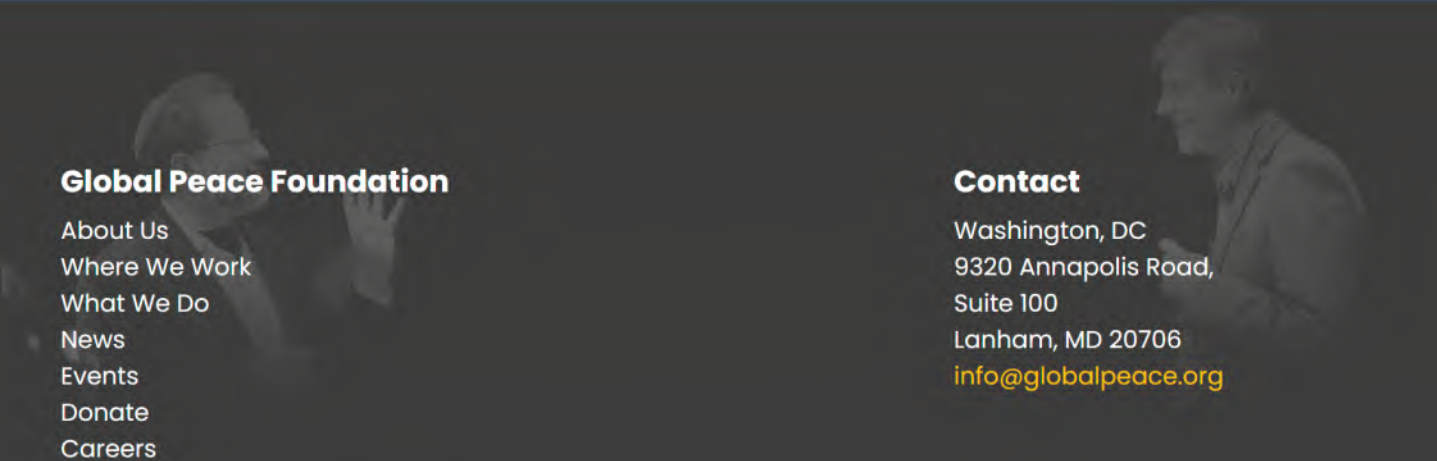
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Contact

Washington, DC
9320 Annapolis Road,
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From Small Acts to Lasting Peace: 5 Ways We Can Build Peace Together

Anu Lama

September 20, 2026

Where does peace truly begin?

Does it begin when world leaders come together for talks, when negotiations happen, and agreements are signed? Or does it begin when people forgive one another, listen to one another, and choose to look beyond their differences?

Talks and agreements matter. But lasting peace is also built much closer to home: in our everyday lives, in our communities, in small interactions, acts of kindness, and moments of understanding that help people live together with dignity and

inspired by the courage of those who champion peace in neighborhoods, classrooms, and communities. And let's call on world leaders to invest in a peaceful future for all people."

So, how can we start? How can we build peace in our everyday lives?

Perhaps it begins with simple choices: a kind word, a listening ear, a helping hand, or the willingness to understand someone different from us. These may seem small, but they can become the beginning of something much bigger.

This International Day of Peace, the Global Peace

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The International Day of Peace, the Global Peace Foundation (GPF) invites us to look closer to home and recognize the many ways we can contribute to building more peaceful communities. Here are five simple, practical ways to begin.

1. Create Spaces for Dialogue



Participants sign in at the Hayin Banki Peace and Reconciliation Committee inauguration ceremony.

Peace begins when people are willing to listen to one another, even across differences.

Differences are natural. People may differ in views, backgrounds, cultures, and experiences. The goal is not to erase these differences but to create spaces where people can express them openly, respectfully, and peacefully.

GPF in action: In Hayin Banki, Kaduna, Nigeria, GPF Nigeria partnered with Bethel Candle of Hope for the Vulnerable to establish the Hayin Banki Peace and Reconciliation Committee. The initiative brought together people from different faith communities for conflict-resolution training, dialogue, and community activities. More recently, Christian and Muslim leaders and residents

gathered for an interfaith iftar, creating an opportunity for direct interaction, shared experience, and relationship-building.

[Read the story here.](#)

Start small: The next time someone sees an issue differently from you, listen to understand before responding. Ask questions, stay curious, and give the conversation room to breathe. Sometimes, peacebuilding begins by making someone feel heard and understood.

2. Give Young People a Voice

Young people are not only the leaders of tomorrow; they are contributors to peace today.

They bring fresh



Students at Ratna Rajya School practicing public speaking, prototyping, and idea pitching.

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perspectives, creativity, energy, and the courage to imagine a future beyond existing divisions. When young people are given meaningful opportunities to participate, lead, and contribute ideas, they become active partners in shaping more peaceful communities.

GPF in action: GPF Nepal is raising the next generation of peacebuilders through its flagship Project Saksham. Through the program, youth develop leadership skills rooted in peacebuilding, responsibility, teamwork, humility, and service while creating solutions to real-life community issues.

[Read the story here.](#)

Start small: Listen to young people. Take their ideas seriously. Give them a voice in the conversation and real opportunities to lead.

3. Strengthen Families



Families are where many of our first lessons are learned. A family that encourages openness, patience, and understanding

nurtures individuals who carry those values into schools, workplaces, and wider communities.

Peace in families does not mean families never disagree. It means learning how to disagree without allowing differences to break relationships.

GPF in action: GPF and Global Peace Women (GPW) believe that **Peace Begins in the Home**. Over the years, GPF and GPW have advanced programs that strengthen peacebuilding in families. One example is the Global Network Call, **“The Power of Family in Peacebuilding: Why Peace Begins in the Home?”** The program brought people from around the world into meaningful discussion on the role of families in creating peaceful communities.

[Read the story here.](#)

Start small: Peace at home can be as simple as putting aside our phones, sitting together, and asking, “How are you?” Making time to listen, acknowledge different perspectives, and say “I’m sorry” or “I understand” can strengthen relationships over time.

4. Care for the Spaces We Share

Our streets,
parks,
schools,
community
centers,
and shared
spaces
belong to
all of us.

The way we
care for
them reflects our shared responsibility and
respect.



Villagers hold up solar lanterns donated by the All Lights Village project.

Keeping shared spaces clean, safe, and welcoming does more than improve our surroundings. It creates opportunities for people to come together and develop a stronger sense of belonging.

GPF in action: GPF Philippines' **All-Lights Village Project** demonstrates this kind of community-driven development. What began with solar lighting and access to electricity has grown into broader community engagement, encouraging local ownership, environmental stewardship, and shared spaces that serve families, learners, and teachers while creating opportunities for connection, education, and livelihood.

[Read the story here.](#)

Start small: Look around your community and ask, "What is one thing I can do to make this shared space better for everyone?" It may be a neighborhood clean-up, tree-planting activity, or community project. Invite someone to join you. What begins as an effort to improve a place can become an opportunity for people to work side by side, get to know one another, and build trust.

5. Build Partnerships



Prof. Baissou Sissoko leads an interactive session on conflict, peace, and restorative approaches.

No individual,
organization,
or community
has every
answer.
Schools,
businesses,
youth groups,
civil society
organizations,
local
authorities, and residents all bring different
experiences and resources.

When these strengths come together around a

when these strengths come together around a shared purpose, small efforts can become collective action. We do not have to agree on everything to work together on something that matters to everyone.

GPF in action: GPF's partnership with the University of Baltimore for the Baltimore Cross-Community Reconciliation Project shows how institutions can combine their strengths for peacebuilding. The partnership brought residents from different racial and social backgrounds together for structured dialogue, relationship-building, and reconciliation. It later expanded into educational initiatives, applied research, leadership development, and community engagement, showing how collaboration can turn shared values into sustained peacebuilding efforts.

[Read the story here.](#)

Start small: Identify one issue in your community and ask, "Who else cares about this?" That question could be the beginning of a meaningful partnership.

Peace Starts Where People Choose to Practice It

Peacebuilding can seem too large for one person. But perhaps we underestimate the weight of everyday choices.

Beyond treaties and agreements, peace also depends on how people treat one another after the meeting ends, how communities respond when differences surface, and whether we choose to repair what has been strained instead of walking away from it.

Peace is not only something we ask leaders to protect. It is something we practice in the places where we already have influence: our homes, our schools, our workplaces, our neighborhoods, and our communities.

This International Day of Peace, we do not need to wait for the perfect moment or the perfect plan. We can begin with one action: one conversation handled with more care, one young person encouraged to lead, one family relationship strengthened, one shared space cared for, or one partnership started.

That may not change the whole world in a day.

But it can change the place where we stand.

And that is where peace has to begin.

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