



Soka Gakkai  
International  
Action for Peace

# Peace *Activities*

Annual Report 2024

# About Us

We are a globally connected *community* that inspires *hope* to create *peace*

The Soka Gakkai is a global, community-based Buddhist organization with a membership of over 12 million people around the world that promotes peace, culture and education centered on respect for the dignity of life. The Soka Gakkai International (SGI) as a non-governmental organization has been in consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) since 1983. The SGI Office for UN Affairs operates in New York and Geneva, representing the SGI at the UN.



## Action for Peace

The SGI strives to strengthen connections between individuals, civil society and the UN in order to build a peaceful, just and inclusive world. Our focus areas of work include peace, disarmament, environment and sustainability, human rights education, gender equality and women's empowerment and humanitarian relief. We believe that when united toward a shared goal, human beings have the power to do extraordinary things.

Soka Gakkai organizations and their members around the world also engage in grassroots activities to promote the culture of peace, based on the understanding that individual happiness and the realization of a peaceful world are inextricably linked. Each local organization develops activities in support of the UN agenda in line with its unique cultural context.

## Peace Proposals

Between 1983 and 2022, annual peace proposals were authored by Daisaku Ikeda (1928–2023), President of SGI. These 40 proposals, as well as statements he issued, continue to guide the SGI's work at the UN. They also inform the activities undertaken by local Soka Gakkai organizations around the world. [Peace proposals](#) dating from 2000 to 2022 are available for download.

The peace proposals consistently focused on ways of revitalizing and strengthening the role of the UN and the importance of civil society participation, with the belief that the global solidarity of ordinary citizens committed to supporting the UN will help empower and strengthen it. In 2013, [A Forum for Peace](#), a compilation of 30 years of proposals addressing the UN, was published and launched at UN Headquarters in New York.

Explore our  
[Peace Proposals](#)





# Disarmament



## 2024 Overview

SGI's activities for nuclear abolition originate from the 1957 anti-nuclear declaration by second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda to 50,000 youth in Japan. Since then, the SGI has promoted nuclear disarmament at the grassroots level and internationally. Following the awarding of the 2024 Nobel Peace Prize to the Japanese hibakusha organization Nihon Hidankyo, the SGI was invited by the Nobel Institute to cosponsor and co-organize the Nobel Peace Prize Forum themed "NUKES – How to Counter the Threat."

SGI also participated in the 38th International Meeting for Peace of the Community of Sant'Egidio and spoke at the forum titled "Remembering the Victims and Imagining a World without Nuclear Weapons." SGI supported a showing in Tokyo of "Portraits of the Hibakusha—80 Years Remembered" created by 80,000 Voices and photographer Patrick Boyd. The SGI was also invited to participate in the regional "Workshop on Fostering Cooperation and Enhancing Consultation: Mechanisms among the existing nuclear-weapons-free zones" held in Kazakhstan where the documentary supported by SGI, "I Want To Live On: The Untold Stories of the Polygon" about the Semipalatinsk Test Site was screened.

Hayley Ramsay-Jones of SGI (front row, right) joins Stop Killer Robots campaigners in London for the #VoteAgainstTheMachine global action



### DEC | OSLO, NORWAY

Panelists at the Nobel Peace Prize Forum, "NUKES – How to Counter the Threat," co-organized by the Nobel Institute and SGI

With growing concerns over digital dehumanization and increasing autonomy in weapons systems, the SGI continues to be an active member of Stop Killer Robots (SKR) coalition which calls for new international law on Autonomous Weapons Systems (AWS). In this capacity, SGI conducted several activities including encouraging states to pass the second resolution on AWS at the UN General Assembly First Committee on Disarmament and International Security which achieved an impressive 166 "yes" votes.

At the two-day intergovernmental conference on AWS hosted by Austria, SGI delivered a statement and presented the SGI-SKR exhibition "Automated by Design" was displayed. In addition SGI joined campaigners in London and Tokyo for the #VoteAgainstTheMachine global action, conducted surveys and took part in dialogues with the general public to help raise awareness about the threats of AWS.

MAR-MAY | TOKYO, JAPAN

## Exhibition: “Portraits of the Hibakusha—80 Years Remembered” Held in Tokyo

The inaugural showing of the exhibition “Portraits of the Hibakusha—80 Years Remembered” in Japan was held at the Soka Bunka Center in Tokyo, from 16 March to 31 May 2024. The exhibition attracted about 20,000 viewers from around the world, demonstrating the universal impact of its message.

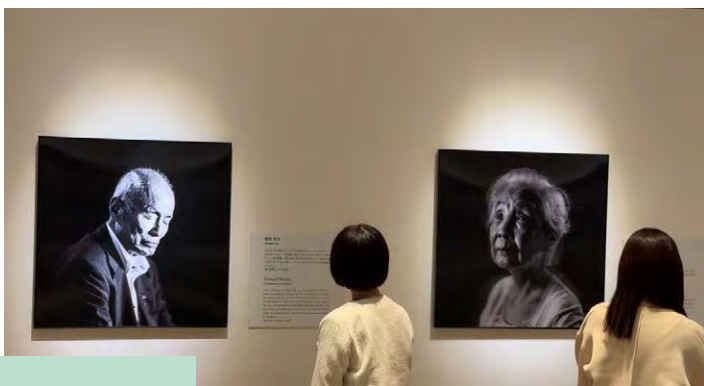
The exhibition was created by 80,000 Voices, a UK-based organization, and photographer Patrick Boyd, and it was supported by SGI. This initiative was born out of a commitment to share the poignant stories of the hibakusha through the medium of art, reaching as broad an audience as possible.

A specialized lenticular technology was used to create evocative black and white portraits of 52 hibakusha from Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The portraits are coupled with personal reflections by each individual, displayed in Japanese and English.

Masanori Shinagawa was exposed to radiation 30 km from the detonation point in Hiroshima when he was four years old. It was only in 2023 that he received an Atomic Bomb Survivor’s Certificate, an official document issued by the Japanese government. Masanori’s message is: “It is a pity that leaders still think you can fight wars for the sake of peace and that nuclear weapons are necessary—that they don’t value dialogue and see that the lives of others are as important as their own.”

The exhibition elicited powerful emotional responses from its audience: “The portraits of each person were so powerful that I could not hold back my tears at the poignant eyes and messages from the hibakusha who have lived through these tragedies for almost 80 years.”

The exhibition will be shown in other venues across Japan, aiming to reach a wider audience.



Visitors reflect on the messages of the hibakusha at the Tokyo exhibition

AUG | ASTANA, KAZAKHSTAN

## UNODA and Kazakhstan Cohost Workshop to Enhance Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones

From 27–28 August 2024, the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) and the Government of Kazakhstan co-organized a workshop to enhance global cooperation among nuclear-weapon-free zones (NWFZs) at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Kazakhstan in Astana.

Representatives from NWFZs, international agencies and civil society discussed measures to bolster cooperation among the zones. SGI delegates participated as a part of civil society. The focus was on sustaining the existing frameworks of NWFZs and expanding their geographical scope.

First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs H.E. Akan Rakhetullin highlighted Kazakhstan’s historic decision to close the Semipalatinsk Test Site 30 years ago and its involvement in the formation of the Central Asian Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone.

UN Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Izumi Nakamitsu, noted that NWFZs are increasingly recognized as vital components of the global nuclear disarmament framework. These zones, covering over half of the world’s landmass, are crucial regional mechanisms for enhancing both global and regional peace and security. The workshop provided a valuable platform for exchanging best practices related to these



Hirotsugu Terasaki, SGI Director General for Peace and Global Issues (right), speaks during the side event

zones, with a particular focus on the potential establishment of new NWFZs.

The workshop also featured impactful remarks from Karipbek Kuyukov, a renowned artist and a member of the affected community. Born without arms due to exposure to Soviet nuclear testing, Kuyukov shared his personal experience and insights.

At a side event, a screening of a *documentary* coproduced by the Kazakh NGO Center for International Security and Policy and SGI was held on 28 August. It sparked discussions on the urgent need for nuclear disarmament. Diana Murzagaliyeva shared her *personal experience* of challenging disabilities caused by the nuclear tests.



## SEP | PARIS, FRANCE

## “Imagine Peace” Conference Participants Remember Victims and Imagine a World Without Nuclear Weapons

Soka Gakkai representatives attended the 38th International Meeting for Peace of the Community of Sant'Egidio from 22–24 September 2024 in Paris, France. The conference brought together leaders of the world's religions, representatives of the cultural realm and civil society.

The opening assembly was attended by approximately 3,000 people. Andrea Riccardi, who founded the Community of Sant'Egidio in 1968, said it may seem dreamy to talk of peace in times of war. Nevertheless, he urged, “Believers must not lose the dimension of hope that comes from faith.”

President Emmanuel Macron of France joined the assembly and spoke at the end. He stated, “War is rooted in dehumanization. We dehumanize the other, the enemy,”

and added, “With the current global challenges, we have an immense need for imagination.”

On 23 September, Anna Ikeda of SGI spoke in one of 21 forums held during the meeting, titled “Remembering the Victims and Imagining a World without Nuclear Weapons,” moderated by Andrea Bartoli of the Sant'Egidio Foundation for Peace and Dialogue. Ikeda introduced a story of a Hiroshima atomic bomb survivor and stressed the importance of remembering our human dignity when discussing the issue of nuclear weapons. She also emphasized the important role of faith communities in challenging the current security doctrine based on nuclear deterrence.

The panel included UN Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Izumi Nakamitsu, Archbishop John C. Wester of Santa Fe, Jean-Marie Collin of ICAN France and Ivana Hughes of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation. Bartoli concluded by sharing with participants pieces of paper with names of people who perished in Hiroshima and Nagasaki on 6 and 9 August 1945.

The meeting closed on 24 September with a ceremony in front of Notre-Dame Cathedral. His Holiness Pope Francis sent a message.



Anna Ikeda of SGI (right) speaks at a forum titled “Remembering the Victims and Imagining a World without Nuclear Weapons”

## DEC | OSLO, NORWAY

## Nobel Peace Prize Forum on “NUKES – How to Counter the Threat”

In December 2024, the world celebrated Nihon Hidankyo's well-deserved Nobel Peace Prize, a testament to their tireless work toward a world free of nuclear weapons. SGI accepted an invitation from the Nobel Institute to co-sponsor and co-organize the Nobel Peace Prize Forum on “NUKES – How to Counter the Threat,” and related events.

The Forum, held on 11 December 2024 at the University Aula in Oslo, followed the Nobel Peace Prize Award Ceremony. It was sponsored by the University of Oslo, the City of Oslo, the International Forum for Understanding and SGI, and centered on nuclear weapons proliferation.

The Forum opened with powerful testimonies from hibakusha Dr. Masao Tomonaga and Keiko Ogura. Tomonaga, a hematologist, has dedicated his career to researching the effects of radiation. Ogura, founder of Hiroshima Interpreters for Peace, shared her harrowing experiences as a hibakusha with world leaders at the 2023 G7 Hiroshima Summit.

Rafael Mariano Grossi, Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), delivered a compelling keynote address. A roundtable on “The Nuclear Threat” then explored the erosion of the nuclear taboo and the alarming



Hibakusha Dr. Masao Tomonaga (right) and Keiko Ogura (left) share their testimonies at the youth dialogue with hibakusha event

rise of nuclear threats including AI. A second discussion on “Ways Forward” stressed the imperative of disarmament education. Nina Tannenwald from Brown University highlighted No First Use (NFU) policies as a crucial step towards a nuclear-weapon-free world.

Later the same day, in collaboration with the University of Oslo and other partners, SGI also co-organized a closed-door high-level expert panel on NFU policies and arranged a youth dialogue with hibakusha, featuring ICAN Executive Director Melissa Parke alongside Ogura and Tomonaga. This provided local students with a valuable opportunity to learn about the realities of nuclear weapons.



### SEP | PHILIPPINES

On 22 September, SGI Philippines held Youth Peace Fairs at four centers nationwide. The event engaged 500 participants with peace-themed games, discussions on SGI's peace proposals and, at the Manila center, the "Everything You Treasure—For a World Free From Nuclear Weapons" exhibition.



### SEP | MADRID, SPAIN

On 28 September, La Alianza por el Desarme Nuclear (Alliance for Nuclear Disarmament), a coalition of 60+ groups including Soka Gakkai of Spain, held an event at the Soka Gakkai center in Madrid. The gathering marked the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons. Speakers included IPPNW Co-President Carlos Umaña and Yoshihiro Nakashima, a third-generation hibakusha.



### AUG | MEXICO CITY, MEXICO

The exhibition "Everything You Treasure—For a World Free From Nuclear Weapons" was held at The College of Mexico from 5–15 August. The opening ceremony was attended by Dr. Jans Fromow Guerra, Regional Vice President of IPPNW, and Ambassador Flávio Roberto Bonzanini, Secretary-General of OPANAL.

### APR | VIENNA, AUSTRIA

## SGI Participates in 2024 Vienna Conference on Autonomous Weapons Systems

A two-day international conference, "Humanity at the Crossroads: Autonomous Weapons and the Challenge of Regulation," hosted by the Austrian government, took place on 29–30 April 2024 at the Hofburg Palace in Vienna. It was preceded by the "Action at the Crossroads" conference, a civil society forum held on 28 April, organized by Stop Killer Robots (SKR), the Austrian Red Cross and PAX, in cooperation with the government of Austria. Hayato Yamashita and Sanya Rajpal of SGI participated in both meetings.

During a plenary session at the civil society forum, Rajpal spoke on a panel addressing technology development and gaps in regulations. She highlighted that AI and Autonomous Weapon Systems (AWS), which are incapable of harnessing ethics and morality in decision-making, should be forbidden from making life-and-death judgements.

Meanwhile, Yamashita attended the forum's interfaith workshop to discuss a faith-based analysis of the challenges of AWS and ways to engage with faith communities to influence multilateral processes. He shared the idea of "ethical disconnect," a concept introduced in the peace proposals of SGI



Campaigners from the Stop Killer Robots coalition gather after participating in the AWS conferences in Vienna

President Daisaku Ikeda in which those who direct attacks and those who are targeted are not in the same place. This results in more inhumane and brutal consequences of war.

Following the civil society forum, over 140 states attended the "Humanity at the Crossroads" conference, with over 1,000 participants from UN agencies, international organizations and civil society, including SGI.

Over the two days, the conference explored the issues posed by and challenges for regulating autonomous weapons systems from legal, ethical, humanitarian



and security perspectives. On the second day, Yamashita delivered a statement on behalf of SGI emphasizing that life-and-death decisions should never be delegated to machines, calling for an international treaty to prohibit and regulate autonomy in weapons systems to safeguard the rights and dignity of humanity.

The conference concluded with the Austrian government announcing the chair's summary, which underscores the importance of human control over new technology, stating: "The delegation to machines of decisions over choices of targets and life and death is an issue that concerns all of us."

On 25 May, to share learnings and outcomes from the "Humanity at the Crossroads" conference, Yamashita joined a webinar hosted by Kansai Soka High School in Osaka, Japan. About 330 first-year students attended the webinar.

Yamashita addressed key issues of AWS from the perspectives of international law, gender and bias, and ethics and highlighted the importance of young people engaging in this issue. Students had learned about autonomous weapons in their classes, and deepened their understanding. One student commented as follows:

*"The fact that it is so easy to create such a weapon, while they do not exist yet, is very scary. I also thought that the possibility of innocent civilians being targeted was the worst thing that could happen. It is also terrifying to think that the error rate of the facial recognition system varies depending on race and gender. Each human life is precious, and I think it is absolutely wrong that people could be killed because of errors."*

**Kansai Soka High School student**



Sanya Rajpal of SGI (left) speaks during a panel at the civil society forum on autonomous weapons in Vienna



Hayato Yamashita of SGI (right) shares a faith-based perspective at the interfaith workshop on autonomous weapons



#### AUG | GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

A side event titled "An Interfaith Dialogue on Killer Robots" took place on 27 August 2024, during the UN meeting of the Group of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems. Hosted by the World Council of Churches and supported by the SKR coalition, the meeting featured panelists representing Christianity, Islam, the Bahá'í International Community and SGI.

Hayley Ramsay-Jones of SGI (on screen) was a speaker and commented, "Given that autonomous weapons systems are designed to target and kill based on data inputs and preprogrammed algorithms, we are extremely concerned about algorithmic bias and discriminatory impact." She further elaborated, "Within Buddhism, there is a concept of interconnectedness of life. In this sense, you cannot build true happiness on someone else's suffering."



#### OCT | LONDON, NEW YORK, TOKYO

The seventy-ninth session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) First Committee on Disarmament and International Security took place in New York from 7 October to 8 November 2024. SGI representatives monitored the First Committee virtually and took part in the Stop Killer Robots #VoteAgainstTheMachine global action in London and Tokyo. The purpose of that grassroots action was to show states that it is time for regulation to catch up to the pace of technological innovation.

During the First Committee meetings, SGI monitored and engaged in both nuclear weapons and autonomous weapons systems discussions.



# Environment & Sustainability



## 2024 Overview

SGI's environmental initiatives in 2024 continued to address the triple planetary crisis of climate change, pollution and nature loss through advocacy, community-based initiatives, awareness raising and non-formal education activities. Across UN environmental processes, we advanced environmental and sustainability advocacy with a focus on youth engagement, rights-based approaches and interfaith collaboration.

In March 2024, SGI Youth and 28 partners co-organized the Future Action Festival, gathering 66,000 youths in Tokyo to advocate for nuclear abolition and climate action. Their joint statement highlighted that over 90 percent of young respondents desire to contribute to society's betterment.

Youth representatives formed the majority of SGI's delegations to UN climate and biodiversity conferences. With partners, SGI co-convened a dialogue series examining human rights-based approaches to biodiversity and climate action. This culminated in a multi-actor dialogue held before the Biodiversity Conference (COP16), bringing together about 60 representatives from various stakeholders, resulting in a call to action and collaborative initiatives.

In interfaith collaboration, SGI joined the Women, Faith and Climate Network and renewed its commitment to the UNEP Interfaith Women's Council. SGI also continued co-convening the Asia Pacific Faith-Based Coalition for Sustainable Development.

Following a successful 2020–23 reforestation project in Togo, Soka Gakkai committed to a three-year reforestation project in Benin, engaging over 200 women in agroforestry and advancing gender equality through income opportunities, with the support of its local partner, the African Women's Network for Community Management of Forests (REFACOF). Concurrently, the Soka Amazon Institute responded to Brazil's severe drought through joint relief efforts with Brazil SGI and local partners, while continuing its ecosystem restoration and environmental education work.

In several countries, SGI continued to promote environmental awareness primarily through its educational exhibition "Seeds of Hope & Action," complemented by seminars and forums designed to foster sustainable action and ecological consciousness among diverse communities.

*Created for COP16, "Biodiversity Jenga" was a six-meter-tall stack of hollow blocks, containing dioramas of different ecosystems inhabited by tiny animal sculptures crafted by 200 young students*



## OCT | CALI, COLOMBIA

## SGI Promotes Youth and Faith Engagement for Rights-Based Action at UN Biodiversity Conference

SGI participated in the UN Biodiversity Conference (COP16), which took place in Cali, Colombia, from 21 October to 3 November 2024, under the theme “Peace with Nature,” to advance global biodiversity protection efforts. SGI also joined the related Global Youth Summit from 16–20 October.

The conference marked several significant developments, including the establishment of a permanent subsidiary body for indigenous peoples and the adoption of the Article 8(j) work program. Additionally, the agreement that 50 percent of the new Cali Fund will support Indigenous Peoples and local communities represented a strong step toward inclusive, rights-based approaches to conservation.

SGI actively participated in both youth and faith-based initiatives. “One of the most inspiring aspects of this COP has been supporting youth advocacy priorities in the

negotiations and helping to draft our collective statements,” said Flore Ghetti, SGI representative and member of the Global Youth Biodiversity Network.

The conference also saw unprecedented engagement from *faith communities* at COP16 and the launch of a groundbreaking *report* that showcases faith groups’ implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, including the work of the Soka Amazon Institute in Manaus, Brazil.

While progress was made in several areas, including marine and coastal biodiversity protection and increased recognition of synergies between biodiversity and climate action, serious concerns remain about ambition levels.

“We worry about a broader pattern of resistance to incorporating comprehensive human rights language across different areas of negotiation. Sustainable environmental outcomes cannot be achieved without respecting and upholding human rights,” said SGI representative Alexandra Goossens-Ishii.

Against this backdrop, SGI, together with BESNet, SwedBio, CDKN and Focali, with the support of the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the UN Human Rights Office, organized a pre-COP16 multi-actor dialogue to further explore the role of rights-based approaches.



Flore Ghetti of SGI (right) speaks at the launch of the Faith for Biodiversity report

## NOV | BAKU, AZERBAIJAN

## SGI Participates in COP29 Climate Summit

At the 29th Conference of the Parties (COP29) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in Baku, Azerbaijan from 11–24 November 2024, SGI participants advocated for meaningful youth participation, rights-based approaches to climate action and the inclusion of civil society voices in the discussion on peace and security.

SGI partnered with other faith-inspired groups to ask the question: “What really makes us safe?” during an event on this theme on 16 November, co-organized by SGI, SGI-UK, the Quaker United Nations Office, Quaker Earthcare Witness, Quakers in Britain and the Women’s International League for Freedom and Peace (WILPF).

Lucy Plummer of SGI stressed that the issue of humans’ separation from nature—the root of the climate crisis—is missing from the conversations. “Unless we rectify this and make peace with nature, we simply will not have the wisdom needed to resolve this crisis. The indigenous peoples know it and have been coming every year with this crucial message.”

SGI engaged in several panel discussions focused on advancing youth engagement in climate policy processes and promoting youth well-being in climate action, including delivering a workshop titled “Self Care Is Climate Care” in partnership with the Afrika Youth Caravan to COP.



Lucy Plummer of SGI (left) co-facilitates an event on the well-being of youth climate activists

Flore Ghetti of SGI participated in YOUNGO, the UN’s youth climate constituency, and spoke at an event on 19 November cohosted by the United Nations University, titled: “The Role of Youth Empowerment for Advancing Climate and Biodiversity Action Synergies.” Nobuyuki Asai of SGI highlighted faith groups’ unique role in building bridges across divided communities at an event at the Just Transition Pavilion on 16 November.

During a panel at the Resilience Hub, co-organized by SwedBio, the Climate and Development Knowledge Network and SGI, advocates highlighted how a human rights-based approach to biodiversity and climate action is both an ethical imperative and the most effective strategy, requiring meaningful engagement with indigenous peoples and local communities.

APR | FLORIDA, USA

## SGI Joins Earth Charter Conference on “Reimagining Education for Ecological Civilizations”



Joan Anderson (left) and Kiyoshi Akasu of SGI (right) presenting at a breakout session on environmental education

From 12–14 April 2024, a conference hosted by Earth Charter International (ECI) took place at Rollins College in Winter Park, Florida, United States. The conference, titled “Reimagining Education for Ecological Civilizations,” aimed to foster collaboration among innovative approaches to education contributing to ecological civilization.

It attracted 155 participants from 20 countries and regions. Keynote speakers included Jeremy Lent, author and founder of the Deep Transformation Network, who highlighted the need to shift from a worldview of separation to one of connection, emphasizing the role of education in realizing this shift.

Another keynote speaker was Dr. Mary Evelyn Tucker, Co-founder of the Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology, who stressed China’s

record of promoting environmental policies for over a decade.

In total, including breakout sessions, there were over 70 presentations that highlighted ecological civilization and the need for both policy reform and inner transformation. A participatory session led by ECI youth representatives, including Kiyoshi Akasu of SGI, addressed stereotypes about youth, such as the assumption that young people need guidance due to a lack of experience.

Akasu also presented together with Joan Anderson of SGI in a breakout session, where they introduced the dialogue between SGI President Ikeda and Dr. Aurelio Peccei of The Club of Rome, Before It Is Too Late.

Other presenters included Professor Michiyo Kakegawa of Soka University in Japan and President of Soka University of America Ed Feasel, who shared experiences in fostering global citizenship. The event also highlighted activities by the Soka Amazon Institute in Brazil and saw the launch of the “Seeds of Hope and Action” hashtag campaign.

The conference was organized under the UNESCO Chair on Education for Sustainable Development and the UNESCO UNITWIN Cooperation Programme on Education for Sustainable Development and Social Transformation.

BSG



OCT | MUMBAI, INDIA

## Combating Plastic Pollution in India

From 14–20 October 2024, Bharat Soka Gakkai (BSG) organized its second Plastic Collection Drive in Mumbai, bringing together over 5,000 people to tackle plastic pollution. As part of its ongoing “Say No to Plastic” initiative, BSG partnered with the 5R-Cycle Foundation and Bisleri’s Bottles for Change program. Together, they collected and recycled 10,425 kg of plastic, preventing this waste from reaching landfills.



MAR | NAIROBI, KENYA

## SGI Joins Advocacy Efforts at UNEA-6 and OECPR-6

The sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-6) took place from 26 February to 1 March 2024 at the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya. It was preceded by the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives (OECPR-6), held from 19–23 February 2024. UNEA provides a unique opportunity for governments, civil society groups, the scientific community and the private sector to shape collective environmental policy and action.

Alexandra Goossens-Ishii of SGI attended OECPR-6 and UNEA-6, where she advocated for various resolutions focusing on nature-based solutions, land degradation, synergies to tackle the triple

planetary crisis, climate change and solar radiation management.

On the margins of UNEA-6, Goossens-Ishii also attended an expert workshop organized by PAX on nature-based solutions for peace. During that workshop, together with Ashanapuri Hertz from SwedBio, she co-facilitated a session to identify what elements from a human rights-based approach to climate and biodiversity action could be relevant for nature-based solutions.

Additionally, on 29 February, Goossens-Ishii spoke in an online side event titled *“The Right to a Healthy Environment: Interfaith and Ethical Perspectives,”* hosted by the Parliament of the World’s Religions and SGI, among other organizations.

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## Seeds of Hope & Action

APR | CARACAS, VENEZUELA

From 8 April to 10 May, the “Seeds of Hope & Action” exhibition was displayed at the Central University of Venezuela (UCV) in Caracas. The opening ceremony welcomed some 120 faculty and students, including UCV Rector Victor Rago and Dean Juan Carlos Apitz Barbera.

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AUG | BANGKOK, THAILAND

From 30 August to 1 September, Soka Gakkai Thailand co-organized “Power of One (Power of You)” at Bangkok’s Mitrtown mall, drawing nearly 20,000 attendees. Featuring the “Seeds of Hope & Action” exhibition, panel discussions and youth-led initiatives, the event highlighted the transformative potential of individual and collective efforts in achieving the SDGs.

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SEP | JAKARTA, INDONESIA

On 8 September, Soka Gakkai Indonesia supported “Mission to Solve Poverty: Education is a One Stop Solution” at its Jakarta headquarters, as part of the University of Indonesia SDGs Roadshow. The event featured the “Seeds of Hope & Action” exhibition and lectures by NGO representatives, welcoming around 200 Soka Gakkai future division members, and students from 16 universities.



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AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND

## SGI New Zealand Youth Host SDGs Event

On 24 March 2024, the SGI New Zealand (SGINZ) youth group in Auckland hosted an event promoting the SDGs at the SGINZ Culture Centre with groups including The Peace Foundation, the Islamic Women’s Council of New Zealand and Seed Waikato. Alastair Thompson, cofounder of Scoop online news, gave the keynote speech.



# Human Rights Education



## 2024 Overview

SGI believes that individual transformation is key to initiating systemic and structural change and that all life is worthy of respect. Human rights education (HRE) plays a crucial role in combating discrimination, fostering dignity and equality, empowering individuals to transform their environment and, ultimately, building a culture of human rights. Through advocacy and non-formal education, SGI supports the World Programme for Human Rights Education (2005–ongoing) and the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training (2011).

In 2024, SGI advanced HRE efforts in alignment with the World Programme for Human Rights Education (WPHRE) through collaborations with Amnesty International and the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), providing platforms for young activists to drive change. A key initiative was the side event at the ECOSOC Youth Forum, “Towards Peaceful and Inclusive Societies: Human Rights Education for, with and by Youth.” This event introduced “*Changemakers: Stories of Young Human Rights Educators*,” a multimedia educational tool highlighting young educators’ efforts to inspire empathy and activism.

*Group discussions at the consultations on the Plan of Action for the fifth phase for the World Programme for HRE, April, UN Headquarters, New York*



### DEC | GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

*A youth-led event, held on Human Rights Day, marking the OHCHR’s official launch of the fifth phase of the World Programme for HRE*

On Human Rights Day in December, SGI co-organized “Our Rights, Our Future. Right Now” in Geneva, focusing on youth-led advocacy for gender equality, climate justice and digital rights. This event also launched the fifth phase of the WPHRE (2025–2029), emphasizing children and youth.

On 2 December, SGI cohosted a workshop on disability rights, where advocate Maselina luta stressed the need for accessible HRE resources. In Japan, SGI supported the 7th Youth Forum on Human Rights Day, addressing gender equality and youth-driven policy reform on abortion laws, comprehensive sexuality education and LGBTIQ+ rights.

Through these initiatives, SGI upholds human rights education as a catalyst for building just, inclusive and empowered communities worldwide.



## APR | UN HEADQUARTERS, NEW YORK, USA

## Human Rights Education – Priorities for Youth

On 17 April 2024, SGI, Amnesty International and OHCHR, also known as the UN Office for Human Rights, co-organized a side event during the ECOSOC Youth Forum at UN Headquarters in New York titled “Towards peaceful and inclusive societies: human rights education for, with and by youth.” Elisa Gazzotti of SGI and Paulina Tandiono of the UN Office for Human Rights co-moderated the event. Speakers included Head of Human Rights Education (HRE) at Amnesty International Kate Moriarty and two young human rights champions featured in the multimedia resource project “*Changemakers: Stories of Young Human Rights Educators.*”

These were Andrés Allán Sánchez Osorio, founder of Fundación Efecto Valores in Mexico, and Aiki Matsukura, activist for youth victims of sexual exploitation and abuse in Japan. First, Sánchez Osorio shared about the transformative potential

of HRE in marginalized communities, particularly for youth with abusive or violent domestic backgrounds.

Next, Matsukura stressed the critical issue of sexual exploitation of children and youth, growing exponentially in the digital realm. She underscored how biased views regarding gender and sexuality underlie this issue and emphasized the importance of preventing these from passing on to future generations through HRE. Elements of self-worth and bodily autonomy should be at the center of HRE, she stressed.

On 18–19 April, Gazzotti represented SGI and the NGO Working Group on Human Rights Education and Learning at consultations on the Plan of Action for the fifth phase of the World Programme for HRE convened by the UN Office for Human Rights at UN Headquarters in New York.

## SEP-OCT | UN OFFICE AT GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

## SGI Participates in the Fifty-Seventh Session of the UN Human Rights Council

From 9 September to 11 October 2024, the fifty-seventh session of the UN Human Rights Council was held in Geneva.

The Council adopted a Resolution on the Plan of Action for the fifth phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education, set to commence next year until 2029. This phase will focus on youth and children, linking human rights education to climate change, gender equality and digital rights.

Elisa Gazzotti of SGI stated, “The adoption of this resolution is a crucial step towards ensuring that human rights education is implemented at national and local levels. It provides a comprehensive framework for developing educational programs that address contemporary challenges faced by young people.”

SGI representatives participated in various side events and negotiations throughout the session. They emphasized the importance of human rights education to ensure that human dignity is at the center of all endeavors that promote and protect human rights, contributing to realizing the culture of peace. In addition, together with Amnesty International and the UN Office for Human Rights, SGI presented the project “*Changemakers: Stories of Young Human Rights Educators.*”



Elisa Gazzotti of SGI (second from left) speaks at a side event introducing the “Changemakers” project

SGI also delivered a statement on behalf of the NGO Working Group on Human Rights Education and Learning, which SGI co-chairs.

As part of the *Geneva Human Rights Biodiversity and Land Task Force*, SGI also co-organized a *side event* highlighting the interconnections between human rights and biodiversity.

In a landmark move, the Human Rights Council also adopted a new resolution on biodiversity and human rights. Alexandra Goossens-Ishii of SGI commented, “This new biodiversity resolution marks a significant milestone in integrating human rights considerations into environmental policies.”



Changemakers Andrés Allán Sánchez Osorio (left), founder of Fundación Efecto Valores in Mexico, and Aiki Matsukura (right), activist for youth victims of sexual exploitation and abuse in Japan

## DEC | GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

## SGI Supports UN's Fifth Phase of the World Programme for HRE with Youth-Led Event and Disability Workshop



Elisa Gazzotti of SGI (right) working with participants in the two-day workshop promoting the rights of persons with disabilities through Human Rights Education

On 3–4 December, marking the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, Elisa Gazzotti of SGI, together with the UN Office for Human Rights and an organization based in Tunisia that works with the deaf community, participated in a two-day workshop in Geneva on promoting the rights of persons with disabilities through Human Rights Education.

On 10 December, Human Rights Day, SGI co-organized a youth-led event together with the UN Office for Human Rights in Geneva, “Our Rights. Our Future. Right Now’ through Human Rights Education for, with and by Youth.” The event was

held in partnership with UNESCO, Amnesty International and the NGO Working Group on Human Rights Education and Learning at the Palais des Nations and saw the official launch of the fifth phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education from 2025 that focuses on children and youth.

The invited youth attendees also engaged with Soufiane Hennani from Morocco and Dejana Dexi Stošić from Serbia, two young human rights educators featured in Changemakers: Stories of Young Human Rights Educators, a documentary and multimedia education tool produced by SGI with the UN Office for Human Rights and Amnesty International.

In opening remarks, Astrid van Genderen Stort, Chief of External Outreach and Partnership Service at the UN Office for Human Rights, stated that universal human rights cannot be achieved without the voices and contributions of youth. Gazzotti of SGI introduced the Changemakers project together with Ruth Zaldibar of Amnesty International.

Stošić from Serbia commented, “Don’t be afraid to raise your voice and to say what you think. In a world full of deception, telling [the] truth is a revolutionary act.”

## DEC | TOKYO, JAPAN

## Youth Lead the Conversation on Gender Equality and Human Rights in Japan

On 8 December 2024, the 7th Youth Forum on Human Rights Day took place in Tokyo, attracting around 50 participants. Cohosted by the Soka Gakkai Peace Committee and Amnesty International Japan, and supported by the UN Information Centre in Tokyo, the event addressed gender inequality and the role of young people in shaping a more just society.

Hiromi Kusano, Senior Advocacy Manager at the Japanese Organization for International Cooperation in Family Planning (JOICFP), highlighted Japan’s recent review by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). In the review, CEDAW brought to light systemic issues in Japan, including the lack of comprehensive sexuality education and outdated abortion laws which continue to perpetuate stigma and create barriers for women.

Kusano declared: “Inequality harms us all. By standing with the marginalized and using our voices, we can dismantle harmful norms and champion gender equality. Young people are leading this change.”

Akira Nishiyama, Deputy Executive Director of the Japan Alliance for LGBT Legislation, presented a sobering view of Japan’s position within the OECD, ranking 34th out of 35 countries for legal protections

of LGBTIQ+ individuals. Nishiyama discussed systemic discrimination against sexual minorities.

The event also featured Vaibhavi Sharma Pathak, Associate Human Rights Officer at the UN Office for Human Rights, who joined online from Geneva, and Kaoru Nemoto, Director of the UN Information Centre, served as moderator.

Participants discussed actionable steps they could take in their communities. Ideas ranged from raising awareness on social media to initiating local advocacy efforts. One participant reflected, “Human rights advocacy isn’t just about laws; it’s about changing mindsets. Even small acts of empathy and education can improve the lives of others while paving the way for legal reform.”



Hiromi Kusano, Senior Advocacy Manager at JOICFP (right), delivers the keynote speech during the youth forum panel discussion



# Peace



## 2024 Overview

SGI promotes the culture of peace as a set of values, attitudes and ways of life that reject violence and are centered on dialogue. We hope to see the culture of peace deeply rooted in our communities and societies, and view it as a framework that enables us to take an interconnected and interrelated approach to the various issues on the UN agenda reflected in our focus areas.

The year 2024 marked the 25th anniversary of the UN Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace. In September, SGI representatives joined the Summit of the Future, a high-level event that brought world leaders together at UN Headquarters in New York, “to forge a new international consensus on how we deliver a better present and safeguard the future.”

In advance of the Summit of the Future, in March, some 66,000 youths gathered for the Future Action Festival held at the Japan National Stadium in Tokyo. The event, co-organized by SGI and other groups, was watched by an additional 500,000 people online. A statement issued at the festival called for immediate action on nuclear weapons abolition and the climate crisis.

Other activities conducted by

66,000 youths gather for the Future Action Festival held at the Japan National Stadium in Tokyo



### NOV | TRETTS, FRANCE

On 24 November, the Soka Movement in France held a youth and peace festival at its culture center in Trets, bringing together over 1,300 young people. The event featured a symposium where participants, including ICAN France Director Jean-Marie Collin and professionals from diverse fields such as journalism and dance, discussed the importance of taking action toward building peace.

national Soka Gakkai organizations also addressed the theme of peace. For example, SGI-UK, together with The Club of Rome and the Centre for Applied Buddhism, co-organized a one-day conference titled “It’s Time for a Human Revolution!” in October at their Taplow Court center. In countries including Argentina, France, Paraguay and the Philippines, youth members organized peace festivals and seminars.



MAR | TOKYO, JAPAN

## Future Action Festival on Nuclear Abolition and Climate Crisis Held in Tokyo

On 24 March 2024, some 66,000 youths gathered for the *Future Action Festival* held at the Japan National Stadium in Tokyo, in advance of the UN Summit of the Future. The event, watched by an additional 500,000 people online, called for immediate action on the abolition of nuclear weapons and the climate crisis.

The Organizing Committee, consisting of representatives from GeNuine, Greenpeace Japan, the Japan Youth Council, Kakuwaka Hiroshima, Youth for TPNW and SGI Youth, issued a joint statement to be submitted to the Summit of the Future. A total of 28 partner and supporting organizations, including a United Nations agency, collaborated in the preparation process.

The *joint statement*, titled “Let Us All Unite for a Sustainable Future: Centering on the Voices of Youth in Society,” was based on the results of a youth awareness survey completed by some 120,000 people. Over 90 percent of respondents indicated that they would like to contribute to the betterment of society. Asked if nuclear weapons are necessary, more than 80 percent said that they are not. The survey results were shared at the festival and compiled into a detailed *summary report*. The statement was also presented at the UN Civil Society Conference held in Nairobi, Kenya, in May 2024.

At the festival, the joint statement was handed to Rector of the United Nations University and UN Under-Secretary-General Tshilidzi Marwala. UN Assistant Secretary-General for Youth Affairs Felipe Paullier and Executive Director of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) Melissa Parke sent video messages to the festival, which also featured live music, dance performances and a panel discussion on nuclear abolition and sustainability. SGI Youth in Japan exhibited panels and videos sharing the testimonies of atomic bomb survivors from Hiroshima and Nagasaki in one of the booths set up by cooperating and supporting organizations.



Youth participants in front of the Japan National Stadium in Tokyo

SEP | NEW YORK, USA

## SGI, Faith Actors and the Summit of the Future

During the *Summit of the Future*, on 22 September 2024, UN member states adopted the Pact for the Future together with the Global Digital Compact and Declaration on Future Generations.

Hiro Sakurai and Ivy Koek of SGI participated in various events ahead of and after the Summit. Koek moderated an event organized by the IMPACT Coalition on Faith-based Solutions and cosponsored by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and the UN Multi-faith Advisory Council.

On 23 September, SGI co-organized an event convened by the Trilateral Partnership of Regional Faith-based Networks for the SDGs from Africa, Asia-Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean that brought together faith-based organizations, youth, the UN and academia. As co-convenor of one of the three regional networks, Hiro Sakurai of SGI welcomed the participants, and Harumi Endo of SGI joined a panel session as a youth representative.

During the Summit Action Days on 20 and 21 September, SGI youth representatives from Japan contributed to co-organizing the side event “Envisioning Our Peace: Youth Voices on Nuclear Weapons, Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, the Climate Crisis.” Together with other members of the Tokyo Future Action Festival Organizing Committee, Miyuki Horiguchi of SGI shared a report on the festival.



SGI youth representatives at the side event titled “Envisioning Our Peace: Youth Voices on Nuclear Weapons, Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, the Climate Crisis”

On 21 September, at the event “*Building the Future: Synergetic Collaboration on Nuclear and Climate Crises*,” panelists discussed how meaningful youth participation can be achieved. SGI representatives moderated the event and gave closing remarks.

On the same day, Koek spoke at an event commemorating 10 years of the *Cities for CEDAW campaign* as Co-Chair of the NGO Committee on the Status of Women, NY. She commented that the UN General Assembly resolution on the *Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace* adopted 25 years earlier had, identified equality between men and women as one of its action areas.



OCT | LONDON, UK

## Celebrating 40 Years of Dialogue: A Call for Human Revolution



Conference participants engaging in dialogue

On 8–9 October 2024, a conference titled “It’s Time for a Human Revolution! Sparking Action Through Inner Transformation and Mutual Learning” was hosted at Taplow Court, SGI-UK’s national center. It was co-organized by The Club of Rome, its Fifth Element initiative and the Soka Gakkai, with support from SGI-UK and the Centre for Applied Buddhism.

The 150 participants included academics, activists and youth, including representatives from The Club of Rome’s youth network, the 50 Percent. Over 450 more people joined online on 9 October. This was part of a joint project marking the 40th anniversary of *Before It Is Too Late*, a dialogue between The Club of Rome cofounder, Dr. Aurelio Peccei (1908–84) and SGI President Daisaku Ikeda (1928–2023), and

the 45th anniversary of *No Limits to Learning*, a report to The Club of Rome. The Peccei-Ikeda dialogue explored inner transformation or “human revolution”—as essential for building a sustainable and peaceful society.

On 8 October, SGI-UK General Director Justine Marchant spoke, followed by Carlos Álvarez Pereira, Secretary-General of The Club of Rome, and Robert Harrap, SGI Europe Co-chair. Harrap emphasized how Ikeda and Peccei, despite their different cultural and religious backgrounds, both identified solutions to shared human challenges through dialogue.

Presenters shared how inner change can spark societal change. Alice Ferrario of the youth-led Senzatomica campaign on nuclear disarmament in Italy spoke on “Humans and Self.” Karima Kadaoui, member of The Club of Rome, addressed “Humans and Others,” while Dr. Alexandra Goossens-Ishii of the SGI Office for UN Affairs discussed “Humans and Nature.”

Participants then engaged in group dialogues to explore the different aspects of the topic.

On 9 October, scholars and youth held an intergenerational panel discussion, and the event concluded with a youth session looking to future collaboration for the sake of peace.

Dais Hayashi



AUG | WELLINGTON, NEW ZEALAND

The 9th annual “Tumanako! Children’s Art Works for a Peaceful World” exhibition, co-organized by SGINZ and partner organizations, opened at Johnsonville Library in Wellington, showcasing 271 artworks expressing children’s hopes for peace and a nuclear-weapon-free world. The exhibition was also held in Auckland and Tauranga.

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SEP | HIROSHIMA, JAPAN

Soka Gakkai held its 33rd Youth Summit on the Renunciation of War in Hiroshima, Japan, in September. Participants visited Hiroshima’s Peace Memorial Park, offering flowers at the Cenotaph for the A-bomb Victims and pledging their commitment to peace. Since 1989, the summit has brought together youth from across Japan to discuss advancing peace efforts.

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OCT | ASUNCIÓN, PARAGUAY

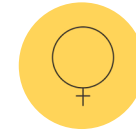
On 12 October, Soka Gakkai of Paraguay held a peace festival at its culture center in Asunción, with 450 participants enjoying youth-led dance and musical performances. Donations of nonperishable food were collected for children in need. Leading up to the event, members organized recycling drives for cans and plastic bottles in support of the SDGs.



# Gender Equality & Women's Empowerment



SGS



## 2024 Overview

Respect and equality, including gender equality, are central to the values SGI embraces and foundational to its commitment to women's empowerment and leadership, seen as a self-motivated process to bring forth one's full human potential. With its grassroots presence around the world, SGI has built an extensive network of women who are leading its movement to promote the culture of peace.

In 2024, advocacy efforts for gender equality included engagements at the UN Civil Society Conference in May and the Summit of the Future in September. SGI engaged in two UN Multi-faith Advisory Council related events: the first with the UN Population Fund where multi-faith actors celebrated 30 years of achievements since the International Conference on Population and Development, and the second another during the High-Level Political Forum on "Dispelling Misconceptions and Myths: Faith Actors Advancing Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls."

In collaboration with the Working Group on Human Rights Education and Learning, during the 68th Commission on the Status of Women, an event was organized on the importance of human rights



### MAY | NAIROBI, KENYA

*Ivy Koek of SGI (right) delivers final remarks at the UN Civil Society Conference workshop, "The Road from the Summit of the Future to Beijing+30 and Beyond," emphasizing the importance of civil society leadership in advancing gender equality.*

education in the context of the priority theme on poverty.

As Co-Chair of the NGO Committee on the Status of Women, New York, SGI has co-led efforts to spotlight the UN Security Council Resolution on Women, Peace and Security by dedicating October as Peace Month.

Soka Gakkai organizations around the world also engaged in local activities to promote the sustainable development goals (SDGs), including women's empowerment events in India, Singapore and elsewhere. Bharat Soka Gakkai held its fourth Women's Symposium in Dehli with the theme "Breaking Barriers: Women Shaping a New Society for the Dignity of Life." The Women's Peace Committee in Japan continued its support of the culture of peace and held events related to the SDGs nationwide.

*Participants at Soka Gakkai Singapore's sixth Soka Women Lecture Series, marking International Women's Day*



MAR | NEW YORK, USA

## Tackling Poverty and Investing in Gender Equality Discussed at UN CSW68

The sixty-eighth session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW68), held from 11–22 March 2024 in New York, focused on women and poverty with discussions around unpaid care and domestic work, changing gender stereotypes and ending gender-based violence.

Ivy Koek, Elisa Gazzotti and Yuki Ito of SGI participated in CSW68 and co-organized two parallel events as part of the NGO CSW68 Forum. SGI's event on "Overcoming Poverty: Young Women's Leadership Through Education" featured stories of young women, and research to show how human rights education is being used to tackle poverty and advance gender equality for young women. Cosponsors included the Permanent Mission of Slovenia, Human Rights Education Associates, Zonta International, the NGO

Working Group on Human Rights Education and Learning (NGO WG on HREL) and the NGO Committee on the Status of Women, New York (NGO CSW/NY). Gazzotti, who serves as the NGO WG on HREL Chair, spoke about the World Programme for Human Rights Education.

Together with the United Religions Initiative (URI) and the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers, and cosponsored by Women in International Security (WIIS), SGI also co-organized an event focusing on what new steps are needed to effectively finance the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

As NGO CSW/NY Co-Chair, Koek co-moderated civil society briefings at the UN, and co-led the planning of the NGO CSW68 Forum with a total of 765 events in person and online, in addition to committee-sponsored events, healing and community spaces, an artisan fair, caucuses and conversation circles, and engagement of over 16,000 individuals on the forum's virtual platform.



Elisa Gazzotti, Ivy Koek and Yuki Ito of SGI (left to right) participate in CSW68

## Women's Peace Committee, Japan

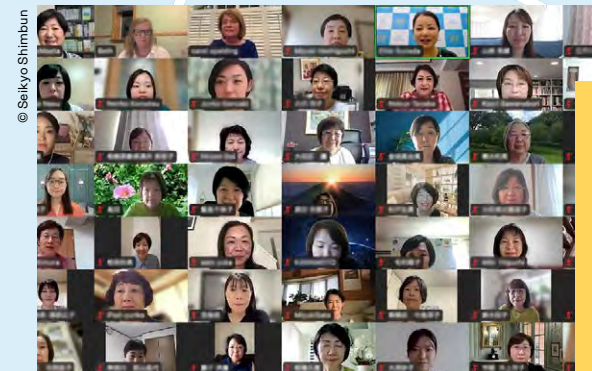
MAR | TOKYO, JAPAN

On 20 March, Mirian Vilela, Executive Director of the Earth Charter International, spoke as part of the Culture of Peace Lecture Series hosted by the Women's Peace Committee (WPC) in Tokyo. Her lecture focused on the significance of the Earth Charter and explored ways to integrate sustainability into daily life.



KASUGAI, JAPAN

The WPC organized over 100 SDG forums across Japan to showcase how individuals can advance the SDGs through local action. At one forum, Satomi Yoshida, a single mother of three, shared her efforts to address hunger and food waste (SDGs 1 and 12) by running a free food pantry and organizing children's "restaurants" at local events to provide free meals to children.



JULY | ONLINE

On 27 July, the life of environmental activist Hazel Henderson (1935–2022) was celebrated in an online symposium linking the US-based trustees continuing her legacy and 100 members of the WPC throughout Japan, fostering shared learning inspired by the values she and SGI President Daisaku Ikeda explored in their 2004 book *Planetary Citizenship*.



SEP | NEW YORK, USA

## October 2024 Designated as Peace Month by NGO CSW/NY



Participants gather for NGO CSW/NY's second Peace Rally

The NGO Committee on the Status of Women, New York (NGO CSW/NY) dedicated October 2024 as peace month to commemorate the adoption of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS). "Hear Them: Voices of Women and Girls in Armed Conflict and Occupation" was the topic of the committee's October monthly meeting, which attracted over 800 registrants. The Beijing Platform's Critical Areas of Concern on Women and Armed Conflict and the Girl Child were addressed at the meeting.

Ivy Koek of SGI, NGO CSW/NY Co-Chair, introduced the panel moderator, Shirine Jurdi, President of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom Lebanon and member of the Steering

Committee of the Arab States Civil Society Organizations and Feminists Network. Jurdi asked, "Are we here to point out the billions spent on arms—2.4 trillion dollars poured into weapons that perpetuate destruction? No... We are here to ask the deeper questions... Why is there endless funding for war but so little for life and dignity?"

Three first-hand testimonials were followed by speakers including Suhair Mahdi, Executive Director, Human Security Initiative Organization (MAMAN) in Sudan; Rasha Jarhum, Co-Director, Peace Track Initiative of Yemen; and Hala Bugaighis, Co-Founder and Director, Jusoor Center for Studies and Development in Libya.

On 24 October 2024—the day of the annual UN Security Council Open Debate on WPS—NGO CSW/NY held its second Peace Rally. Participants chanted, "No justice, no peace," as they walked from the Church Center for the United Nations to the Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza across from UN Headquarters. Cosponsors included the Conference of NGOs in Consultative Status with the United Nations (CoNGO), Global Network of Women Peacebuilders and OXFAM International, among others.

SGS



### MAR | SINGAPORE

Marking International Women's Day, on 9 March, Soka Gakkai Singapore hosted the sixth event in its Soka Women Lecture series, in collaboration with the National University of Singapore. The lecture, "Lifestyles-based Interventions for the Prevention of Dementia," attracted 400 participants, supporting SDG 3 on good health and well-being.

BSG



### MAR | NEW DELHI, INDIA

Bharat Soka Gakkai, in partnership with Pedal On, organized its sixth workshop for economically disadvantaged women on 9 March. Focusing on gender equality and empowerment, the workshop in Delhi included sessions on "ME to WE" and the impact of empowered women, with participants committing to work toward gender equality alongside other women.

SGIAR



### ARGENTINA

The Acción Solidaria Soka (ASS) movement of SGI Argentina displays the exhibition "Protagonists of a Culture of Peace" that portrays women who stand up for the good of their communities, such as Wangari Maathai and Malala Yousafzai. The exhibition, with docents representing each protagonist, has toured the country.



# Humanitarian Relief



## 2024 Overview

The year 2024 saw increased disaster severity and frequency, as well as a rise in the number of forcibly displaced people worldwide. SGI's engagement in humanitarian relief activities is driven by our belief in the dignity of life and aims to contribute to efforts to increase people's resilience.

In Japan, Soka Gakkai supported disaster relief efforts, including those following earthquakes in the Noto Peninsula in Ishikawa Prefecture and heavy rains in the northeast of the country. Similar activities were undertaken by some other SGI and Soka Gakkai organizations around the world. As part of efforts to assist in the recovery of the heart—a focus on emotional healing—in disaster-stricken communities in Japan, the Soka Gakkai Music Corps held “Bonds of Hope” concerts in Ishikawa Prefecture to express solidarity through music.

To share lessons learned, SGI participated in national, regional and global forums and conferences and organized side events as part of the Japan CSO Coalition for Disaster Risk Reduction (JCC-DRR).



### AUG | ISHIKAWA, JAPAN

At a “Bonds of Hope” concert in Iwate, members of the Soka Gakkai Music Corps perform to support the “recovery of the heart.” Since 2014, around 190 concerts have been held in disaster-affected areas across Japan, drawing close to 80,000 attendees.

Additionally, *Al-Musiqa Tajm'ana*, a music education program in Jordan supported by the Soka Gakkai, completed its fourth year and reached broader communities, including children from both refugee and local communities. This initiative contributed insights to global discussions organized by UNHCR (the UN Refugee Agency), and the International Council for Voluntary Agencies.

A young boy from the audience is given the opportunity to conduct at a “Bonds of Hope” concert in Ishikawa Prefecture, August 2024

## JAN | ISHIKAWA PREFECTURE, JAPAN

## Recovery Efforts in Japan After Noto Earthquake

On 1 January 2024, a magnitude 7.6 earthquake struck the Noto Peninsula in Ishikawa Prefecture in Central Japan. The quake devastated the region, injuring at least 1,300 residents and claiming over 500 lives. More than 127,000 houses were damaged, forcing over 40,000 people to evacuate their homes. Running water remained cut off across many parts of the northern Noto Peninsula until May 2024.

Immediately after the quake, seven Soka Gakkai facilities in Ishikawa and Toyama prefectures provided shelter to over 300 local citizens, serving as short-term evacuation centers.

On 2 January, the Soka Gakkai began delivering stockpiled relief supplies from its facilities throughout Japan to the disaster-affected region. These included food, water, blankets, sanitary

goods, warm clothing and temporary toilet units. Local volunteers then distributed these supplies to 12 locations for people in need to pick up. Nine of these locations were individual Soka Gakkai members' homes.

The Soka Gakkai in Japan also made donations to 14 municipalities in Ishikawa and Toyama prefectures to aid relief operations.

As a faith group, the Soka Gakkai tapped into its strong local network. Members understand the area's geography, communities and the needs and vulnerabilities of many individuals and households.

A couple who run a noodle restaurant in Nanao City provided nearly 100 free meals to their neighbors in the first three days following the earthquake. Also, a group of young volunteers from the Soka Gakkai in neighboring areas was formed to assist in clearing rubble from damaged houses.

Local Soka Gakkai members have been encouraging one another to never give up hope. Local leaders have stressed the importance of listening to and extending warm care and support to each individual.

These efforts illustrate how crucial existing community networks are to effective relief efforts.



Local Soka Gakkai members meet to encourage one another in the aftermath of the Noto earthquake

© Seikyo Shimbun

## JORDAN

## Empowering Communities Through Music Education

Jordan hosts a large number of refugees from neighboring regions. *Music Brings Us Together* (Al-Musiqat Tajm'ana) was launched in 2021 as a joint initiative between Soka Gakkai, Musicians Without Borders (MWB) and local Jordanian NGOs to use music to provide a safe and nurturing environment for refugee and local children, and to foster connection, healing and empowerment.

The program trains adults to provide tools for social inclusion and creative development through music education and equips educators with the skills to create inclusive, creative spaces where children can thrive.

In recent years, the program has incorporated new elements: Music as Therapy Training, giving educators techniques to support children who require extra emotional or psychological assistance, and a new program introduced in 2024 with the local organization Tajalla to nurture children's emotional well-being while preserving the region's traditional music.

The program's impact continues to grow: Up till 2024, 113 trainees—including teachers, social workers and musicians—have completed the basic Music Leadership Training. In 2024, trainees included Jordanians, Yemenis, Syrians and Palestinians, including some from Gaza and Ramallah. More than 220 children with special needs have joined



## JORDAN

Children take part in a music workshop, learning to play the oud, a traditional Middle Eastern instrument

workshops led by Music as Therapy trainees, and over 1,500 children and youth have taken part in music workshops at schools, churches, orphanages and juvenile centers.

Many educators continue integrating music into their daily work, reporting transformation of their teaching methods and perspectives. One trainee shared: "This amazingly changed my way of teaching. . . I can see how it reflected on my students' capacity to learn in a positive, loving environment."

Parents also report noticeable improvements in their children's emotional well-being, including enhanced focus, communication skills and resilience.



## JAPAN &amp; PHILIPPINES

Disaster Risk Reduction *Initiatives in Asia*

The Understanding Risk Global Forum (UR24), organized by the World Bank and Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery, was held in Himeji, Japan, in June 2024, gathering over 1,700 disaster risk management experts from 135 countries. A key side event hosted by the Japan CSO Coalition for Disaster Risk Reduction (JCC-DRR), including SGI, focused on Japan's contributions to anticipatory action and early warning systems (EWS), sharing initiatives planned for Thailand and Vietnam.

Nobuyuki Asai of SGI introduced the key messages of JCC-DRR's research and proposals on EWS, emphasizing the importance of involving local communities and effective dissemination of evacuation information.

SGI also participated in the 10th Sendai Bosai Mirai Forum in March 2024, where it hosted a session on "Peace as the Foundation of Disaster Risk Reduction." Experts highlighted

the role of the climate crisis in increasing disaster risks. The event emphasized the importance of community engagement in DRR.

Hiroko Ogushi introduced Soka Gakkai's initiatives in disaster-affected areas, including responses to the January 2024 *Noto Peninsula Earthquake*. She also stressed the significance of a gender perspective in DRR.

At the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (APMCDRR) in Manila, the Philippines, in October 2024, SGI's Nobuyuki Asai presented the contributions of Japanese faith-based organizations to disaster preparedness and relief, particularly following the Noto Peninsula Earthquake. Faith groups provided practical aid and emotional support through concerts, volunteer work and collaboration with local communities.

Finally, during Bosai Kokutai, Japan's annual national conference for promotion of DRR, held in Kumamoto City later in October, SGI led a session on inclusive disaster risk reduction. With the aging population and rising number of foreign residents, the session focused on inclusivity for vulnerable groups. Panelists shared approaches for supporting older adults, foreigners and people with disabilities, highlighting the daily efforts of faith-based organizations in aiding marginalized communities.



Nobuyuki Asai of SGI delivers a presentation at the Ignite Stage in Manila, Philippines

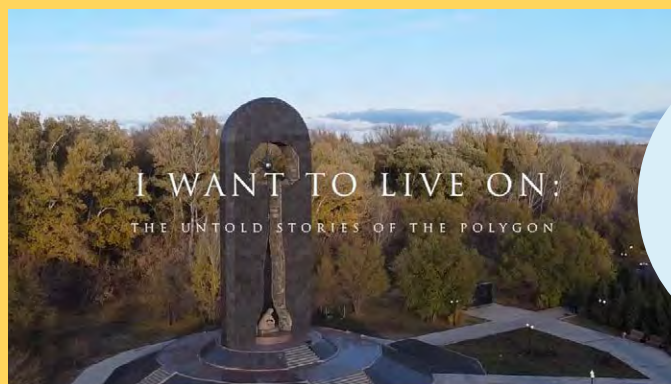


## ARGENTINA

## Youth in Argentina Participate in Social Engagement Activities

Acción Solidaria Soka (ASS) is an initiative of SGI Argentina (SGIAR) youth which began during the pandemic. The group first aided the elderly and those in need of food supplies, sanitary materials and medications. Recently, ASS launched a campaign to combat hunger and poverty by delivering non-perishable food donations to families in need, and a food bank was established. These actions are carried out jointly with Caritas and the Community of Sant'Egidio, delivering food in neighborhood "soup kitchens" throughout the Province of Buenos Aires and other regions. ASS youth also prepare hot meals that are distributed to people experiencing homelessness in the City of Buenos Aires. They also engage in dialogue to offer support and hope. Additionally, the "Solidarity Clothes Rack" has been launched at various SGIAR cultural centers, where used clothing is collected for donation and reuse. ASS also engages in a wide range of environmental actions around the country.

# Featured Resources



Watch the  
documentary



## I Want To Live On: *The Untold Stories of the Polygon*

Through powerful testimonial evidence, this documentary film highlights the lasting suffering caused by nuclear testing at the Semipalatinsk Test Site, affecting individuals in Kazakhstan across three generations to this day.

Created by the [Center for International Security and Policy](#) with the support of SGI.



Watch  
*Changemakers*



## Changemakers: *Stories of Young Human Rights Educators*

“Changemakers: Stories of Young Human Rights Educators,” is a multimedia educational tool jointly developed by the [Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights](#) (OHCHR), [Amnesty International](#) and SGI.

The film features the stories of seven young human rights educators from around the world. For further resources, visit the [Human Rights Education Open Resource](#).



View the  
exhibition



## Automated by Design | *Exhibition Microsite*

This experience is a digital version of our [in-person exhibition](#) that explores [digital dehumanisation](#) - the process by which humans are reduced to data, which is then used to make decisions or take actions that negatively affect their lives.

Automated by Design was curated and produced by [Identity 2.0](#) for [Stop Killer Robots](#) and supported by [Amnesty International](#) and SGI.



Listen to the  
podcast



## Uniting Nations *Podcast*

SGI and [The Metta Center for Nonviolence](#) have partnered to create *Uniting Nations*, a podcast series that explores the intersection of nonviolence and the goals of the United Nations.

Anna Ikeda of SGI serves as the show's cohost, together with Stephanie Van Hook, Executive Director of The Metta Center.





## ***SGI Headquarters***

15-3 Samoncho, Shinjuku-ku,  
Tokyo 160-0017, Japan

**Email:** [contact@peacesgi.org](mailto:contact@peacesgi.org)

***SGI Office for UN Affairs***

**Email:** [info@sgi-ouna.org](mailto:info@sgi-ouna.org)

**Website:** [sgi-peace.org](http://sgi-peace.org)