



Soka Gakkai

Media Kit

**BUDDHISM IN
ACTION FOR PEACE**

Empowering individuals
toward positive global change

www.sokaglobal.org

Soka Gakkai

International Office of
Public Information

The International Office of Public Information of the Soka Gakkai, based in Tokyo, Japan, provides information and responds to queries from the media and researchers.

Media Queries

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FACTS AND FIGURES

The Soka Gakkai is a global community-based Buddhist organization that promotes peace, culture and education centered on respect for the dignity of life.

It has **12 million members** in **192 countries and territories** worldwide with **90 registered constituent organizations**.

Soka Gakkai members practice **Nichiren Buddhism**, and their basic Buddhist practice is chanting the phrase “Nam-myoho-renge-kyo” and reciting excerpts of the Lotus Sutra. They hold regular local discussion meetings to study Buddhist principles and their application to everyday life.

Membership

There are **8.27 million** member households in **Japan**, and **2.8 million** members **outside Japan**:



Asia & Oceania: 1,910,000

North America: 352,000

Central & South America: 325,000

Europe: 162,000

Africa & Middle East: 51,000

President

The president of the Soka Gakkai is

Minoru Harada (1941–).

Harada joined the Soka Gakkai in 1953.

He became president of the Soka Gakkai in 2006 after serving as Secretary General and Vice General Director.

HISTORY

The **Soka Gakkai** upholds a spiritual lineage that originates some 2,500 years ago with Shakyamuni and has been continued by Buddhist teachers in India, China and Japan, reaching its most profound expression in the **teachings of Nichiren** (1222-82).

The **first three presidents** of the Soka Gakkai, **Tsunesaburo Makiguchi**, **Josei Toda** and **Daisaku Ikeda**, have revived Nichiren Buddhism in the modern age and created the basis for its development as a globally accessible philosophy.

Tsunesaburo Makiguchi
(1871–1944)



Josei Toda
(1900–58)



Daisaku Ikeda
(1928–)



1930

The organization's roots date to 1930 in Japan, when Makiguchi and Toda founded the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai (Society for Value-Creating Education), the forerunner of the Soka Gakkai. With Makiguchi as its first president, the organization began as a group of teachers focused on educational reform but later developed into a movement dedicated to the betterment of society through individual inner transformation based on Nichiren Buddhism.

1943

Makiguchi and Toda were imprisoned as "thought criminals" for refusing to adhere to the State Shinto religion used by the militarist government to exert ideological control over the population. Makiguchi died in prison, and Toda emerged in 1945 to rebuild the Soka Gakkai, later becoming the second president.

1947

Amid the chaos of postwar Japan, Ikeda encountered Toda, who became his mentor, and joined the Soka Gakkai.

1960

Ikeda became the third president of the Soka Gakkai, marking the beginning of the organization's growth internationally.

1975

The Soka Gakkai International (SGI) was formed as a global association to link independent Soka Gakkai organizations around the world, and Ikeda became its president.

1983

The SGI was accredited as a nongovernmental organization (NGO) with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

1995

The SGI Charter was adopted, expressing the association's commitment to strive for a peaceful world, contributing to peace, culture and education based on respect for the dignity of life.

2017

The Soka Gakkai adopted its new Constitution, clarifying the role of the founding presidents, basic aspects of the organization's global administration, its essential doctrinal stance and objectives of promoting Nichiren Buddhism for the sake of peace and human happiness.

2021

The SGI Charter was updated and adopted as the Soka Gakkai Charter, further articulating the principles guiding the organization's social engagement grounded in an unwavering commitment to nonviolence and the culture of peace.

PEACE ACTIVITIES

The Soka Gakkai and the SGI (Soka Gakkai International) engage in activities to promote a culture of peace.

Working with the United Nations, NGOs and other stakeholders, the SGI undertakes efforts to address global issues through raising awareness among the public and bringing ideas and recommendations to the UN.

Awareness-raising activities around current global issues are carried out in **five main areas**:

- Peace and disarmament**
- Education for sustainable development and climate action**
- Human rights education**
- Humanitarian relief and disaster risk reduction**
- Gender equality and women's empowerment**

The range of activities includes exhibitions, symposiums, interfaith dialogue, cultural events and humanitarian relief.

Beginning in 1983, Daisaku Ikeda authored 40 annual **peace proposals** directed toward the international community that address issues facing humanity, suggesting solutions and responses grounded in Buddhist philosophy.

These proposals, together with statements he continues to issue on global challenges, provide impetus and direction to the organization's grassroots efforts to build a lasting culture of peace.

The SGI has been accredited as a **nongovernmental organization** (NGO) in consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) since 1983.

The SGI Office for UN Affairs in New York and Geneva is actively engaged at the United Nations.

Peace Activities Annual Reports



AFFILIATED ORGANIZATIONS

The Soka Gakkai has a number of affiliated secular organizations that work to promote peace, culture and education. The activities of these affiliates are open to all.



Ikeda Center for Peace, Learning, and Dialogue is located in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Its mission is to build cultures of peace through learning and dialogue inspired by Buddhist humanism. www.ikedacenter.org



Institute of Oriental Philosophy is dedicated to advancing scholarly inquiry into Buddhism and other world religions in order to clarify the universal value of religion and thereby help address the issues facing humanity today. www.iop.or.jp/



Min-On ("People's Music") Concert Association in Tokyo was founded with the aim of deepening mutual understanding and friendship among countries by promoting the global exchange of musical culture. www.min-on.org



Tokyo Fuji Art Museum was established to promote peace and mutual understanding through cultural and artistic exchange as well as making art more widely accessible to the public. www.fujibi.or.jp/



Toda Peace Institute is an independent, nonpartisan institute committed to promoting a nonviolent, sustainable and peaceful world through policy-oriented peace research and practice. It commissions research, convenes problem solving workshops and seminars and promotes dialogue across ethnic, religious and political divides. www.toda.org/



Soka Education System: Building on the child-centered educational philosophy of Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, the first president of the Soka Gakkai, the Soka education system (kindergarten through university) was founded by Daisaku Ikeda in order to foster global citizens who will contribute to society and help strengthen the foundations of peace. www.soka.edu (Soka University of America) www.soka.ac.jp (Soka University in Japan)



Soka Amazon Institute is situated in Brazil near Manaus. It carries out research into the conservation of the global ecosystem, preserves tree seeds and undertakes reforestation initiatives and environmental education programs. www.institutosoka-amazonia.org.br/en/home-en/

FAQ

How does the Soka Gakkai adapt to different cultures?

The Soka Gakkai respects cultural diversity and encourages its members to be responsible citizens of their respective societies. In each country, for instance, the style and format of regular discussion meetings express the cultural diversity of that society.

Based on its Buddhist philosophy, the Soka Gakkai respects other religions, engages in dialogue and works together with them toward the resolution of fundamental issues concerning humanity.

How is the President of the Soka Gakkai selected?

Within the Soka Gakkai there is a President Selection Committee consisting of representative members of the Board of General Administrators. The term of the President is four years.

What is the role of Daisaku Ikeda?

Daisaku Ikeda is one of the three founding presidents of the Soka Gakkai. He has written numerous essays, articles and books on the Buddhist philosophy of Nichiren and the Lotus Sutra to inspire and encourage the members of the Soka Gakkai around the world. Many Soka Gakkai members view Daisaku Ikeda as their mentor due to the depth of his understanding of Nichiren Buddhism, and his efforts to encourage others to become empowered through Buddhist philosophy and practice.

Ikeda stresses that he owes everything to his own mentor, second Soka Gakkai President Josei Toda (1900–58). The tradition of passing down teachings from mentor to disciple, or teacher to student, has a long history in Buddhism. The commitment of the mentor, or teacher, is to passing on what he or she has learned, so that eventually the disciple surpasses the mentor.

How is the Soka Gakkai financed?

Soka Gakkai organizations are supported through the donations of their members. In Japan, the organization also receives income from subscriptions to the *Seikyo Shimbun* daily newspaper.

Does the Soka Gakkai engage in political lobbying?

As an NGO, the SGI (Soka Gakkai International) is engaged in efforts to promote peace and disarmament; education for sustainable development and climate action; human rights education, humanitarian relief, gender equality and women's empowerment, in cooperation with other NGOs and UN agencies.

For unique historical reasons, the Soka Gakkai in Japan is the main endorsing body for the Komeito political party, which has a platform of policies aimed at peace, environmental protection and support for the vulnerable. Soka Gakkai organizations outside Japan do not and will not ever engage in political activities.

FAQ

What activities does the Soka Gakkai undertake to promote peace and nuclear disarmament?

Since 1957, when second Soka Gakkai President Josei Toda issued his Declaration Calling for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons, the Soka Gakkai has been committed to ridding the world of these inhumane weapons. It has created educational resources, including collections of hibakusha testimonies and exhibitions, and held numerous forums and awareness-raising and signature gathering campaigns calling for nuclear weapons abolition. These efforts are inspired by the peace philosophy of SGI President Daisaku Ikeda and his peace proposals and statements. The Soka Gakkai is a partner of ICAN and welcomes the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

What action is the Soka Gakkai taking to address climate change?

The Soka Gakkai is committed to reducing its carbon footprint and switching to renewable energy sources, taking into consideration local needs, priorities and resources in specific regions and countries. It undertakes awareness-raising campaigns aimed at encouraging individual and collective action toward climate justice. Its affiliated Soka Amazon Institute near Manaus, Brazil, carries out reforestation and tree planting programs that help absorb CO2 and inform local people about the value of the forest.

What is the stance of the Soka Gakkai toward people embracing LGBTQIA and other gender or sexual identities?

The Soka Gakkai embraces and accepts all individuals regardless of their gender or sexual identities, and opposes all forms of discrimination. The Soka Gakkai upholds the international human rights standards enunciated by the United Nations, but recognizes that different countries are at different stages in the application of these standards, and that there are differences in their understanding of, and legal framework regarding, LGBTQIA issues. The organization looks forward to the progress of constructive debate in each national setting.

RELATED WEBSITES



Daisaku Ikeda Website

www.daisakuikeda.org



Nichiren Buddhism Library

www.nichirenlibrary.org



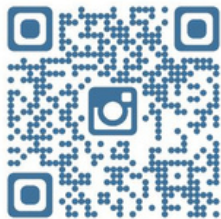
SGI Action for Peace

<https://sgi-peace.org/>

SOCIAL MEDIA

Soka Gakkai (global)

Instagram



Twitter



Facebook



YouTube



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Soka Gakkai
Buddhism in Action for Peace