

Student Blogger: Passion for Education Sparks Global Citizenship

By Guest
Blogger

Today we hear from Muslima Niyozmamadova, a high school student at Aga Khan Academy, Mombasa in Kenya. Issues of poor educational quality in her native country of Tajikistan inspired her to work to improve schooling in impoverished areas of the world. We hope this series of posts by students who are taking action to better the world through participation in the [Global Citizens Youth Summit](#) will be an inspiration to you and your students as well.

by guest blogger Muslima Niyozmamadova

Global citizenship means an awareness of the issues in my community as well as those faced by the world. My role as a global citizen is to promote positive change by trying to solve global problems. I am responsible for my city, country, and the world.

When I was six years old, my family moved to accommodate construction of the University of Central Asia in Khorog, Tajikistan. My family talked about how the university would become one of the best in the world. I was proud that the new university was being built where my family had lived. Even as a young child, education was important to me. I decided that I would one day become the head of the University of Central Asia. At the age of seven, I attended the only school in Badakhshan, the eastern part of Tajikistan. The school offered all subjects in English. I felt that learning the language was my first step towards achieving my dream.

A few years later, I was accepted to the [Aga Khan Academy](#), Mombasa (AKA), one of the best secondary schools in the world, with a full scholarship. I applied to the school as it gave me the opportunity to become globally competent and prepare me better as a leader. While a student at AKA, I began studying the education system in Tajikistan. I was surprised to learn that Tajikistan's literacy rate is 98%. However, few Tajiks qualify for professional jobs outside of Tajikistan because students learn basic proficiency in reading, but do not hone other skills needed to be successful workers, such as internationally qualified doctors, engineers, lawyers etc. I began to connect how poverty is linked to the quality of education.

As a participant at the [Global Citizens Youth Summit](#) in Cambridge, MA, I had the unique opportunity to engage in conversations with peers from around the world on issues of education and poverty. This experience helped me to build the global skills and confidence necessary to work toward a solution to these issues in my community. With my peers, I developed an initiative called YOUTHery, which strives to ensure that children from low-income communities thrive in their early years of development. Our mission is to empower young people to exceed their circumstances through self-discovery and identifying their passions in life. We believe that education is the means of breaking the cycle of poverty. For children to thrive, they need resources, direction, and purpose. Together, my peers and I strive to provide these resources to children in different parts of the world.



Since I attend school in Kenya, I decided to implement my project in the local community in Mombasa. I began working with a government school in the lower income area of the city. Eight of my peers from AKA support my work. My group and I have led workshop based sessions with the 140 students at their school on topics like the importance of education, effective study techniques, goal setting, good hygiene, and water conservation. We either go to their school after our classes to spend about two hours with them every two weeks, or we bring them to our school in groups of 50 over the weekends. Aside from academic sessions, we try and engage the students in sports, crochet, and board games. In addition, we raised money for the school to replace a broken water pump, which will give students access to clean water. We also held a clothing drive at AKA and shared these donations with the students in need at the school. My group also works with students to identify their passions through sports and games. In the future, I plan to donate solar panels to provide sustainable and reliable energy to the school. I am also working to identify sponsors who might donate breakfast to the kindergarten students (200 students) every morning. Without these donations, the students go hungry.

Over the coming summer, a leadership camp, Global Encounters (GE), will take place in my school. Because the camp aims to encourage students to engage in community service, I have handed my project to them to continue the work that I have done, as I believe it is crucial to have sustainability to really make a difference. My school falls under the [Aga Khan Development Network](#) (AKDN) which has done several development projects across Kenya. The Service Coordinator of GE has been able to connect with the Ministry of Education of the country and has communicated YOUTHery vision to him. He was highly impressed by what we do, and therefore, wants us to be the bridge between the government and the individual schools. Many of our visions are similar to the plans of the government, like the focus on Early Childhood Development (ECD) and giving students motivation and support to continue with their education up to secondary school and university. One of the other focuses of the ministry of education is encouraging environmental awareness in the country, and he is trying to achieve this through the youth in schools. We are looking forward to making both our and the country's visions for education a reality, and with the support of the government, we will reach great heights with this project.

During the Celebration of Service Day in school, I will be advertising my project to get younger students to join so that the project can be continued even when I leave in 2017 to go university. After a few years, I see myself launching YOUTHery in Tajikistan for children from low-income families. I want to continue empowering children to succeed against the odds. Moving forward, I will continue to work towards my goal of serving as the head for the University of Central Asia. Education is a basic right for children, whether they live in Kenya or Tajikistan or elsewhere. If we want a more equitable and harmonious world, we must all consider how we can help a child to learn how to act as a global citizen.

For all the youth across the world who wish to make a difference in the world, I want to tell you that it all starts from identifying the issues in your community and taking an initiative to contribute to the prevention or solution of

the problem. It is important to go deep into the issue and find the root causes first, as this is the best way to tackle the issue, although it might take the longest time. Base your project mainly on sustainable development instead of on giving aid or charity. I believe the moment you plan to make a difference in your community you will be on the right path to becoming global citizens.

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Photo courtesy of the author.