

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

GLOBAL YOUTH LEADERSHIP ACADEMY (GYLA)

An innovative learning program that engages youth as future leaders and social & green entrepreneurs for social change and achievement of SDGs

*“We cannot always build the future for our youth,
but we can build our youth for the future.”*

-Franklin D. Roosevelt

*“All our hopes for a better world rest on young people.
Sustainable development, human rights, peace and security
can only be achieved if we empower these young people as leaders.*

*The United Nations must empower young people,
increase their participation in society and
their access to education, training and jobs.”*

-António Guterres, UN Secretary-General

*“Giving young people from all walks of life the opportunity to
truly be active participants in the social and political life of
their societies, as well as in the multilateral project, means
ensuring that we are building a world that is truly for them.”*

-Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of UNESCO

Global Youth Leadership Academy (GYLA) was developed and launched building on the initiative, the concerted efforts and collaborations between United Nations agencies and prestigious universities six years ago. GYLA is a youth-led flagship program that offers young people the opportunities to learn and exchange knowledge and information about the mandates, values and expertise of United Nations system, principles of global governance, sustainable development and frontier knowledge and

Go with You, GYLA

*I have imagined countless times,
What you look like when I meet you
I finally knew
That is the beauty of the moon meeting the stars,
That is the vast expanse of the sky embraced by the sun.
In the countless morning light, bright moon and clear breeze,
You watched the youth tenderly pursuing their big dreams
You said wherever I came from,
As long as I work hard and have talent.
You said the desire to protect peace
Is not far away.
This is our GYLA,
My youth is blooming in your embrace
My future will become brilliant because of you.*

Poem by Jiaoyue Li, GYLAer, from Huazhong University of Science and Technology, February 2021

new skills in order for youth to engage in social change and achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In recent years, United Nations is calling for member states to equip young people with the skills and technology required now and anticipate future needs through strong education and training systems in order to amplify youth voice, support and empower youth participation in public life and organizations, and keep up with technological change and engage in achievement of SDGs. For example, António Guterres, UN Secretary-General stressed, *"the United Nations must empower young people, increase their participation in society and their access to education, training and jobs."* Thus, GYLA endeavors to promote and participate in the UN Geographic Diversity Strategy & Action Plan through outreach activities (online and offline programs) in order to attract more multitalented young people from developing countries and LDCs to join the UN workforce in the future.

The purpose of GYLA is to inspire and empower youth as future global leaders, social & green entrepreneurs for social change and engagement in achievement of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. GYLA works on many different levels to achieve positive social change and SDGs – including advocacy, research, innovative learning & training programs, and social & green business start-up projects. GYLA is a unique youth-led



platform where young people can dialogue with and learn from global successful leaders, practitioners and professionals from the UN agencies, academic institutions and enterprises; it is a cradle where young people can be nurtured to grow and become future leaders, and it also aims to unleash young people's inner sources of new growth potential and achieve new levels of personal fulfilment in their career development in international community.

GYLA: In Support of SDGs

Since she was founded six years ago, GYLA has shared the purpose and vision of the United Nations on youth development and youth engagement, which are cross-cutting issues in the UN 2030 Agenda. GYLA finds herself an intrinsic link to United Nations. GYLA was created at a historical juncture as the 2030 Agenda was adopted in 2015, and the UN 2030 Youth Strategy was developed in 2017. The purpose and values of GYLA are in alignment with the UN's mission on youth development that António Guterres, UN Secretary-General, empathized:



"All our hopes for a better world rest on young people. Sustainable development, human rights, peace and security can only be achieved if we empower these young people as leaders."

GYLA was born for empowering young people as future leaders to engage in the movement of social change, because she is aware that the active engagement of youth in sustainable development efforts is central to achieving sustainable, inclusive and stable societies by the target date, and to averting the worst threats and challenges to sustainable development. As the United Nations turned 75 in 2020, and with only 10 years remaining to make the 2030 Agenda a reality for all, it is very important for institutions at the local, national and global levels to engage young people in global action for SDGs.

GYLA is also a powerful knowledge sharing and learning platform where young people are equipped with frontier knowledge and new technology, and empowered to become systems thinkers, change makers, social innovators, green entrepreneurs and future leaders for a better world.

Memorable Encounter with GYLA

*Encountering GYLA in 2021 winter,
I was impressed by it at first sight.
GYLA is like a ray of enchanting light,
Leading my way to the future that may be bright.*

*Participating in GYLA in 2021 winter,
I met scholars of great knowledge and fame,
I met classmates with a clear lifelong aim.
I can feel in my heart there's hope that flames.
Sometimes learning a concept brand new,
I kept wondering and felt so confused.
Knowing this is essential to get mind fuelled,
I held a firm belief I would finally get used.*

*I've also learnt about
I should be brave to speak out,
Even though not too loud.
It is still worthwhile to be proud.
Now I may try to see with a global view,
And try to achieve more in my youth.*

Poem by Xinyi Zhu, GYLAer from China Labour Relations University. February 2021

For this purpose, GYLA endeavors to be a leader in working with young people: in understanding their needs, in helping to put their ideas into action. In so doing, GYLA integrates SDGs and UN 2030 Youth Strategy in her curricula and activities to empower young people to realize their full potential and to stand up for their rights, and to engage themselves in the efforts to contribute to achievement of SDGs.

GYLA Philosophy: Of the Youth, by the Youth and for the Youth

GYLA is youth-led program embodying the philosophy of “GYLA of the youth, by the youth, and for the youth”. In times of pandemic crisis, GYLA has played a more important role in supporting and amplifying youth voices and actions by boosting the quality and delivery of different programs and activities, and outreaching and helping more young people to mitigate the negative impact, particularly in the developing countries.

GYLA of the Youth

GYLA is a unique platform built for young people to learn from global successful leaders, and exchange information and knowledge with their peers. Young people are encouraged to take ownership of GYLA, in other words, to take the initiative to bring about positive impact of GYLA on the community and society as a whole. Taking ownership means caring about and improving the quality and outcome of GYLA program much as an owner of GYLA. When they take ownership, young people are able to show others that they can trust them to do the right things right. GYLA's core values are at the heart of creating an environment where young people feel empowered to act and bring about social change. *GYLA of the youth* is to nurture a culture that fosters and values ownership. Young people have an obligation to GYLA in terms of results and to act on the GYLA programs that impact those results. Young people are also empowered to be accountable for their own results of their actions.



GYLA by the Youth

Young people are the owners of GYLA, therefore, they have the right and power to govern and manage GYLA, and are responsible for the quality and future of GYLA growth. Since the foundation, GYLA program has been managed, organized, implemented and evaluated by the GYLA dream team and GYLAers. GYLA dream team is the leader of overall GYLA operations. It consists of three sub-teams respectively responsible for social medial, multimedia design & production, and news & reporting. The members of the dream team are recruited from the outstanding GYLAers who graduated from GYLA activities. They are talented and highly qualified with good character, and humble to serve others. What's more, dream team also encourages and involves participants to work for GYLA during the implementation of activities.

GYLA for the Youth

The mission of GYLA is to inspire youth to dream more, learn more, do more, achieve more, and become more. Young people have the creativity, potential and capacity to make change happen – for themselves, for their communities, and for the rest of the world. GYLA is also a dreamer like the youth, therefore, GYLA can promise youth to be the guiding light of the youth, and the stepping stone of the youth, to realize the dreams and goals. Goals give purpose, purpose gives faith, faith gives courage, courage gives enthusiasm, enthusiasm gives energy, energy gives life, and life lifts youth over the bar. The ambitious goal of GYLA is to engage with millions of young people, particularly in impoverished areas and lower-income countries, to create change through participation in different types of learning programs and social events that GYLA will organize, build solid youth networks, reach young people to work on peacebuilding and sustainable development, and is committed to empowering underprivileged youth by providing them with spaces to participate by offering them with various accessible resources and activities.

GYLA Impact



Since 2016, GYLA has organized 7 editions of offline and online learning programs, over 1300 outstanding college students from about 50 top universities around the world have participated in the activities. Many of the outstanding participants have successfully worked as interns and volunteers in the United Nations agencies; some have been recommended to continue studying in the well-known universities in the world; some have found jobs in the multinational companies, and some have started up their own social & green enterprises.

“In GYLA, you will learn more about yourself, know more about the world- how it works, and know more about how to develop yourself to make contribution to the world.” - Naiqian Zhang GYLAer in 2019 from Harbin Institute of Technology, worked as an intern at International Telecommunication Union in Geneva, Switzerland.

“GYLA was a turning point in my life. It was this precious opportunity that enabled me to get a deep understanding of the Sustainable Development Goals, which are in urgent need to be realized, and I think it’s our job to take the responsibility.” - Wenrui Li, GYLAer in 2019 from Nanjing University, studying in Oxford University

“In GYLA, we broadened our horizons, learned about problems and challenges faced by all mankind, and understood the responsibility and mission that we youth should bear.” - Kaiqiang Tang, GYLAer in 2019 from Nanjing University, founder of Nanjing Spiderman Intelligent Robot Co., Ltd.

GYLA has become a well-known brand and flagship program, influential in academic institutions, United Nations Agencies, and youth organizations. Some GYLAers use a feast as the metaphor to describe GYLA’s impact:

*“If we are fortunate enough to meet GYLA when we are young,
wherever we go and whatever we do, GYLA always lives in our heart.
In our heart, GYLA is just like a moveable feast:
a feast of knowledge,
a feast of culture, and
a feast of friendship.”*

Some GYLAers regard GYLA as the Pandora's Box in which GYLA brings them some new and unexpected gifts and sources which they cannot learn in their universities. Some see GYLA as a grand opera, composed of profound knowledge and focuses on youth education. Following the trend of the times, GYLA aims to help young people take the opportunity and adapt to the challenges in the new era. The charm of this audio-visual feast lies in the convergence of Eastern wisdom and Western science, which enables the youth to step out of the ivory tower, realize their mission and adapt themselves in the fast-changing world. GYLA is a gorgeous opera with lingering tunes and enduring images. GYLA is a big stage for ideas and exchanges.

GYLA helps the youth to develop their global leadership with growth mindsets, and empower youth with frontier knowledge, new skills and technology to think more social and ecological issues in the VUCA world and fulfil the social mission. On the stage of world transformation for a better future, GYLA is committed to playing her unique role in bringing positive social change and realization of SDGs.

"Attending the GYLA has reinforced my standpoint... I learned, even though our cultures and values differ, we have a few things in common: the wish to contribute to a better world. And already now, I feel like I am 1% closer to reach the goal of becoming a leader and making the world a safe place. I have often faced the problem to find the strength to do something, but I believe attending GYLA is the first step to take my own initiative." -Hanna Brunzel, participant of 2021 GYLA Summer Program, Otto-von-Guericke University, Germany

"In as much as challenges do exist at certain points, the desire to see change has always kept me going. Attending GYLA has and will always be a precious gift which I pledge to jealously guard and make good use of. This opportunity to acquire knowledge and make friends is totally priceless. Life has been breathed on my dreams and now I have a clear picture of what my contribution to the world is. Thank you, GYLA, for believing in us, thank you for giving us the opportunity to make a contribution to the world today and for generations to come. The program has equipped and positioned me for better leadership." - Ruth Kitamirike, participant of 2021 GYLA Summer Program, Makerere University, Uganda

"GYLA endeavors to be a better builder than a program or an organization. GYLA focuses on maximizing the potential of today's youth, realizing their professional greatness, and building them as systems thinker, social innovators, change makers and future leaders for a better World."

GYLA gives me the opportunity of interacting with more young people. Whenever I meet them, I'm always struck by their optimism, passion and desire to make a real impact. GYLA perfectly embodies this positive energy, providing a platform for our future leaders to speak out, connect and scale solutions for a more sustainable future. Young people are at the heart of social change, and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and in many ways are already leading the way. By giving them a louder voice and a helping hand, I am sure that GYLA, in collaboration with international community, national governments and academic institutions, can build the more sustainable, inclusive world we all want to see." (Dr. Liangrong Zu, former senior UN official, founder of GYLA).

“GYLA’s advocacies, which revolve mainly on sustainable development, and the discussions made during this two-week program are relevant not only because of the deteriorating state of our environment but also because they promote a deeper understanding of culture, cater to an open acceptance of differences and similarities, and demand a more profound commitment from you, the next generation of humans... I am extremely envious of the participants in this program for having a venue like GYLA to hone your talents, develop your confidence, and improve your understanding of your role in global governance.” -Uella Vida Mancenido-Gayo, tutor of 2021 GYLA Summer Program, The Lyceum of the Philippines University

“Looking back into GYLA activities, I wonder what makes GYLA so charming, given that the knowledge shared by the professionals is already the invaluable treasure for the participants. It comes to me that GYLA is made by a group of people with great love to serve the participants, their career and life, and this world. They are always willing to share everything they have with others. I believe the participants have also been touched by their warming hearts. Hope more youth leaders will be able to learn from GYLA about how to serve the world in the future. GYLA gives the youth a light in their way all around.” - Chunliang Zha, tutor of 2019 GYLA Summer Program, Tianjin University, China.