

## Conversation with Faith Abiodun

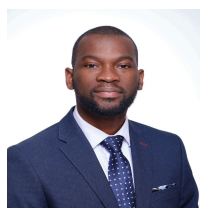
In this People First Talk, we learned about how United World Colleges (UWC) is fostering a global education system to build peace and a sustainable future for all. Watch the talk [here](#).

### Key ideas

- The United World Colleges (UWC) is a global educational movement with a mission to unite people, nations, and cultures for peace and a sustainable future. Founded in 1962 by Kurt Hahn, a German educator who believed in **education with a purpose**, the movement has grown to encompass 18 schools and a network of national committees in over 150 countries.
- **The selection process is decentralized, placing trust in local leadership.** Committees in 150+ countries scout talent and identify promising young people who have the potential to grow into lifelong leaders dedicated to building a more peaceful and sustainable world.

Other notable elements of UWC's approach to leadership development include:

- **Living, leading & being of service together:** UWC brings together students from diverse socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds. This deliberate mix of perspectives encourages students to challenge their own worldviews and learn how to build bridges at an early age. Being of service together is also a key element of this transformative experience, focusing students' attention on moving beyond disagreements and seeing their shared humanity.
- **Instilling a sense of purpose and values:** A five year longitudinal study showed that what distinguishes UWC is a compelling sense of mission. The mission is more than just a statement - it is reinforced through rituals and experiential activities such as project weeks where students are in service together, peace vigils, and 3am conversations. Many years later, when alumni gather, they continue to ask: "*How am I living the mission?*"
- **Developing agency and a commitment to action:** UWC encourages students to become active agents of change. They are empowered to identify challenges within their local communities and take initiative right away, even through small actions. This supports them to grow their leadership and prepares them for larger platforms later on in life.
- **Cultivating systems thinking:** Students learn that none of the challenges we face in the world today can be solved in isolation. They learn to go beyond surface-level analysis to explore the interconnectedness of issues and notice the ripple effect of certain actions.



**Faith Abiodun**

Executive Director, United World  
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“People change systems. People change the world. So the kind of leadership we’re seeing as most important to shape is interpersonal (relational) and systems leadership. There is a need to remind ourselves that the way to start changing the world is by helping the person right next to us.”

— Faith Abiodun