

Ghana Beyond Subsistence Teaching-Learning-Connecting Lessons 2019.04: KOFI ATTA ANNAN

Area: Global Citizenship



Kofi Atta Annan

Born 8 April 1938, near Kumasi, Ghana; died 18 August 2018, in Bern, Switzerland

Secretary-General of the United Nations (1997-2006);
Head of United Nations Peacekeeping (1994-1997); Nobel Peace Prize Winner with the UN 2001 for working to eliminate HIV and international terrorism

❖ To live is to choose. But to choose well, you must know who you are and what you stand for, where you want to go and why you want to get there.

❖ Education is a human right with immense power to transform. On its foundation rests the cornerstones of freedom, democracy and sustainable human development.

❖ Gender equality is more than a goal in itself. It is a precondition for meeting the challenge of reducing poverty, promoting sustainable development and building good governance.

❖ Unfortunately, very few governments think about youth unemployment when they are drawing up their national plans.

❖ We must ensure that the global market is embedded in broadly shared values and practices that reflect global social needs, and that all the world's people share the benefits of globalization.

❖ Often we mistake stability, in terms of security and economic activity to mean a country is doing well. We forget the third and important pillar: rule of law and respect for human rights.

❖ Open markets offer the only realistic hope of pulling billions of people in developing countries out of abject poverty, while sustaining prosperity in the industrialized world.

Kofi Annan



United Nations Sustainable Development Goals for 2030 (2015)

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Artifacts: Key messages of Kofi Annan and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Two Stories:

Famous Ghanaian KOFI ATTA ANNAN

Born in Kumasi with a twin sister, Efua Atta, Kofi Annan was the grandson of a chief. He graduated from senior high school in 1957, the same year that Ghana gained its independence from Great Britain (Biography.com 2018). He described himself as “a-tribal in a tribal world,” and traveled the world to study economics and management at the University of Science and Technology (Kumasi), Macalester College (USA), the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (USA) and Institut Universitaire des Hautes Études (Geneva).

In 1962, Annan took a job at the United Nation’s (U.N.) World Health Organization in Geneva where he worked to resettle refugees at the U.N. High Commission for Refugees. In 1994, as the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping, Annan handled peace negotiations and resettled refugees created by conflicts in Iraq, Kuwait, Bosnia, Nigeria, Libya, Israel and Palestine and East Timor, to name a few (Le Priz Nobel 2001). He collaborated to end the war in Syria in 2012 as the U.N.-Arab League envoy. But he left in frustration because he said Syria, China and Russia refused to cooperate for a peaceful solution (Doubek 2018).

In his role as Secretary-General of the U.N. from 1997-2006, his three key priorities were “eradicating poverty, preventing conflict, and promoting democracy. Only in a world that is rid of poverty can all men and women make the most of their abilities. Only where individual rights are respected can differences be channeled politically and resolved peacefully. Only in a democratic environment, based on respect for diversity and dialogue, can individual self-expression and self-government be secured, and freedom of association be upheld” (Doubek 2018).

Upon learning of his death in August 2018, world leaders clamored to praise Annan’s courage, wisdom, and friendship. “Kofi [Annan] was humanity’s best example, the epitome of human decency and grace. In a world now filled with leaders who are anything but that, our loss, the world’s loss becomes even more painful,” eulogized U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein (OHCHR 2018).

Famous Ghanaian QUEEN MOTHER DZAKUIA OF ADAKLU-WAYA

The kingmakers of Adaklu-Waya enstooled Mama Dzakuia II as Queen Mother at the young age of 13. In Ghana, even when the kingmakers choose very young leaders, they have thoroughly evaluated the candidates for their good character, unselfishness, humor, compassion, responsible nature, and willingness to serve. They look for all the qualities of the wise. By Ghanaian tradition, the kingmakers must educate all newly installed leaders. In the days following her selection, the kingmakers taught Mama Dzakuia details of the community’s oral history so that she could begin to develop an understanding of her place in the history and culture.



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Throughout her life, Mama Dzakuia brought many gifts and abilities to her new role, and she developed into the clear-sighted person the community expected her to be. During her over 60 years of service as queen mother, she successfully advocated for the establishment of an excellent 500-bed regional hospital, access to clean water, improved roads and bridges, and support for other needs of women and children. Mama Dzakuia II urged the women in her community to stand up for themselves, “The foundation is there. The next generation will develop. As a [public school] teacher I had to deal everybody, small, rich. I met a lot of people. I was a friend of Nkrumah and every leader since. I work for development for our people.” Like many of Ghana’s traditional leaders, Mama Dzakuia II committed her efforts to build a better future for her community. (Excerpted from Elder, et. al. 2019) See Mama Dzakuia in the news at:

<https://www.ghanaiantimes.com.gh/adaku-way-a-gets-ultra-modern-slaughter-house/> .

Assignments: Students could:

1. Choose one of Kofi Annan’s quotations and create a poster or take your turn drawing a poster of your understanding and application of the quotation on the classroom board.
2. Discuss the meaning of the word “atribal” and any perceived pros and cons of being “atribal.” Students might also compare and contrast the terms “nationalism” and “patriotism.”
3. Investigate the UN Millennium Development Goals and Sustainable Development Goals that were supported and developed by Kofi Annan at the UN. Determine, too, the progress made in fulfilling them, e.g. girls’ education in Ghana in specific and universal primary education in general.
4. Ask a family member or community leader to talk about a traditional, political, or family leader who promoted gender equality, sustainable development, principled and ethical business dealings, and other human rights as Kofi Annan did. Report to the class.
5. Read Barbara Crossette’s article detailing some of the issues facing the world in 1998. Research some of the areas to understand what has improved or worsened in the intervening 20 years.
6. Choose a recent court case adjudicated in the International Criminal Court (ICC) and stage a courtroom drama reenactment.
7. Debate the role of the ICC in international affairs and whether or not the International Criminal Court shows prejudice against African defendants as some have claimed.
8. Access the Annan-led “Guiding Principles of Business and Human Rights” and apply the three-fold call to action, “Protect, Respect and Remedy,” to a school or local community situation.
9. Learn about other famous Ghanaians, like Kwame Nkrumah and Jerry Rawlings.
10. Study the elements that comprise a democracy, such as free and fair elections and freedom of the press.
11. Study the Geological Society of London’s adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals and what goals they are targeting, such as “addressing climate change... securing access to minerals and rock materials...engineering geology to deliver safe and adequate

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infrastructure...understanding and remediating contamination of our water sources” (Bullough 2018).

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