

What Does it Mean to be a Global Citizen?

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The growing interconnectedness among people, countries, and economies means that there is a global dimension to who we are. The most positive way of responding to this is by pursuing a path of global citizenship. Global citizens see ourselves as part of an emerging world community, and are committed to helping build this community's values and practices.

[Here are 10 Steps that you can take if you are interested in becoming a global citizen.](#)

Step 1. RECOGNIZE THE GLOBAL PART OF WHO YOU ARE: All of our lives have become globalized; whether through the Internet, the way in which we're impacted by the global economy; our desire to provide humanitarian assistance to disaster victims in countries other than our own; or even in our love of world art, music, food, and travel. We all have a part of us that is global. Examine your own life, recognize its global dimension, and reflect on how that affects your view of the world.

Step 2. EXPAND YOUR DEFINITION OF COMMUNITY: Because of the many ways in which countries and people are now so interconnected, we all are now part of an emerging world community. This doesn't mean that we have to give up being a member of other communities, e.g., our town, our country, our ethnicity. It means that we have another community—the world community—to which we now belong. Find ways to celebrate your connection to this community.

Step 3. DISCOVER THE VALUES OF THE WORLD COMMUNITY: Every community needs to have values, and the world community is no exception to this rule. The values of the world community reflect the moral ideals that most of us believe in as the basis for human existence; for example human rights, religious pluralism, participatory governance, protection of the environment, poverty reduction, sustainable economic growth, elimination of weapons of mass destruction, prevention and cessation of conflict between countries, humanitarian assistance, and the preservation of the world's cultural diversity. Take stock of your belief in these

values. Are you aware of ways in which the world as a whole is trying to live by them?

Step 4. BECOME AWARE OF GLOBAL POLICIES AND PROGRAMS: Whether you realize it or not, all around you, policies and programs are being developed to help govern our emerging world community. Such policies range in scope from international treaties that ban the spread of nuclear weapons to administrative rules and regulations governing the internet. Learn about these policies and programs by subscribing to publications such as GCitizen, the Newsletter of The Global Citizens' Initiative (www.theglobalcitizensinitiative.org).

Step 5. ENGAGE WITH THE ORGANIZATIONS THAT ARE TRYING TO GOVERN THE WORLD: As a global citizen you should try and build awareness about the different organizations, which are making the policies shaping our world community. These organizations include international agencies, like the United Nations and the International Monetary Fund, legal tribunals like the World Court and the International Criminal Court, international professional associations like the The International Federation of Accountants or the International Civil Aviation Organization, and transnational corporations like Starbucks, Hindustan Lever, and Smith/Kline/Glaxo. Try to learn about and engage with these organizations and make sure that they are operating in accordance with the values we perceive to be important.

Step 6. PARTICIPATE IN AN ADVOCACY EFFORT FOR GLOBAL CHANGE: Sign petitions, join demonstrations, contribute funds, and explore other ways of advocating for global change. As global citizens we need to join together to express the fact that people across the planet share common views when it comes to basic values such as human rights, environmental protection, and the banning of weapons of mass destruction. The Global Citizens' Initiative (TGCi) is an organization that provides information and opportunities for global citizens to join together and advocate for change.

Step 7. HELP ENSURE YOUR COUNTRY'S FOREIGN POLICY PROMOTES GLOBAL VALUES: Global citizens also are citizens of the countries in which they were born and live. As such we have the ability to influence the positions that our countries take on global issues. We need to help ensure that our country's foreign policy supports the building of equitable global solutions to world problems; solutions

that work for all countries. So let your government know how you feel by supporting leaders who want their countries to become engaged with the world, not isolated from it.

Step 8. PARTICIPATE IN ORGANIZATIONS WORKING TO BUILD WORLD COMMUNITY: There are all sorts of organizations making important contributions to our emerging world community—NGOs, global action networks, international professional associations, transnational corporations, and others. They work on a range of issues related to the values of our world community—ranging from human rights to world arts and culture. Pick one, any one that relates to an issue in which you are interested, and get involved.

Step 9. NURTURE A LIFESTYLE THAT SUPPORTS SUSTAINABLE GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT: The environmental movement has taught us a great deal about how everyday lifestyles and behaviors can have an impact on the quality of life on our planet. The types of transportation we use, how we heat or cool our homes, the types of clothes we wear and the food we eat all affect our quality of life. As global citizens we need to adopt environmentally responsible behaviors in the ways we live.

Step 10. SUPPORT WORLD ART, MUSIC, AND CULTURE: Being a global citizen is also a celebration of the many different arts and cultures of our people. Take time to learn the ways in which different cultures give expression to the human spirit. At The [Global Citizens' Initiative](#) we say that a “global citizen is someone who identifies with being part of an emerging world community and whose actions contribute to building this community’s values and practices.”

To test the validity of this definition we examine its basic assumptions: (a) that there is such a thing as an emerging world community with which people can identify; and (b) that such a community has a nascent set of values and practices.

Historically, human beings have always formed communities based on shared identity. Such identity gets forged in response to a variety of human needs—economic, political, religious and social. As group identities grow stronger, those who hold them organize into communities, articulate their shared values, and build governance structures to support their beliefs.

Today, the forces of global engagement are helping some people identify as global citizens who have a sense of belonging to a world community. This growing global identity in large part is made possible by the forces of modern information, communications and transportation technologies. In increasing ways these technologies are strengthening our ability to connect to the rest of the world—through the Internet; through participation in the global economy; through the ways in which world-wide environmental factors play havoc with our lives; through the empathy we feel when we see pictures of humanitarian disasters in other countries; or through the ease with which we can travel and visit other parts of the world.

Those of us who see ourselves as global citizens are not abandoning other identities, such as allegiances to our countries, ethnicities and political beliefs. These traditional identities give meaning to our lives and will continue to help shape who we are. However, as a result of living in a globalized world, we understand that we have an added layer of responsibility; we also are responsible for being members of a world-wide community of people who share the same global identity that we have.

We may not yet be fully awakened to this new layer of responsibility, but it is there waiting to be grasped. The major challenge that we face in the new millennium is to embrace our global way of being and build a sustainable values-based world community.

What might our community's values be? They are the values that world leaders have been advocating for the past 70 years and include human rights, environmental protection, religious pluralism, gender equity, sustainable worldwide economic growth, poverty alleviation, prevention of conflicts between countries, elimination of weapons of mass destruction, humanitarian assistance and preservation of cultural diversity.

Since World War II, efforts have been undertaken to develop global policies and institutional structures that can support these enduring values. These efforts have been made by international organizations, sovereign states, transnational corporations, international professional associations and others. They have resulted in a growing body of international agreements, treaties, legal statutes and technical standards.

Yet despite these efforts we have a long way to go before there is a global policy and institutional infrastructure that can support the emerging world community and the values it stands for. There are significant gaps of policy in many domains, large questions about how to get countries and organizations to comply with existing policy frameworks, issues of accountability and transparency and, most important of all from a global citizenship perspective, an absence of mechanisms that enable greater citizen participation in the institutions of global governance.

The Global Citizens' Initiative sees the need for a cadre of citizen leaders who can play activist roles in efforts to build our emerging world community. Such global citizenship activism can take many forms, including advocating, at the local and global level for policy and programmatic solutions that address global problems; participating in the decision-making processes of global governance organizations; adopting and promoting changes in behavior that help protect the earth's environment; contributing to world-wide humanitarian relief efforts; and organizing events that celebrate the diversity in world music and art, culture and spiritual traditions.

Most of us on the path to global citizenship are still somewhere at the beginning of our journey. Our eyes have been opened and our consciousness raised. Instinctively, we feel a connection with others around the world yet we lack the adequate tools, resources, and support to act on our vision. Our ways of thinking and being are still colored by the trapping of old allegiances and ways of seeing things that no longer are as valid as they used to be. There is a longing to pull back the veil that keeps us from more clearly seeing the world as a whole and finding more sustainable ways of connecting with those who share our common humanity.

