

# Creating Positive Change

Pick a topic below and create a plan on how to create positive change in our community.

- What are your ideas to address these issues?
- What needs to happen?
- What are the steps to take to make this change?
- BE CREATIVE and HAVE FUN! Your voice matters!!

## YOUTH AND THE ENVIRONMENT



Human beings and the environment are two things that codependent on one another. The problem today is that many people are ignorant and oblivious of their responsibility to the environment and have thus continued to unknowingly or knowingly carry out activities that are harmful to the environment. In order to counter this, great focus is being pointed at youth as agents of change to sustain the environment and create awareness among the whole human population.

Many environmental activities that are harmful to the environment are still in practice today. Such activities intensify today's environmental crises by further perpetuating major environmental issues including: climate-changes, endangered wild life and wild places, environmental degradation, pollution and scarcity of clean water. These five major environmental issues have the potential to

devastatingly impact society particularly young people. Youths are faced with environmental health crisis; environmental food crisis and they live in a world where extinction of endangered species is at a high rate due to all these environmental issues.

## YOUTH INVOLVEMENT

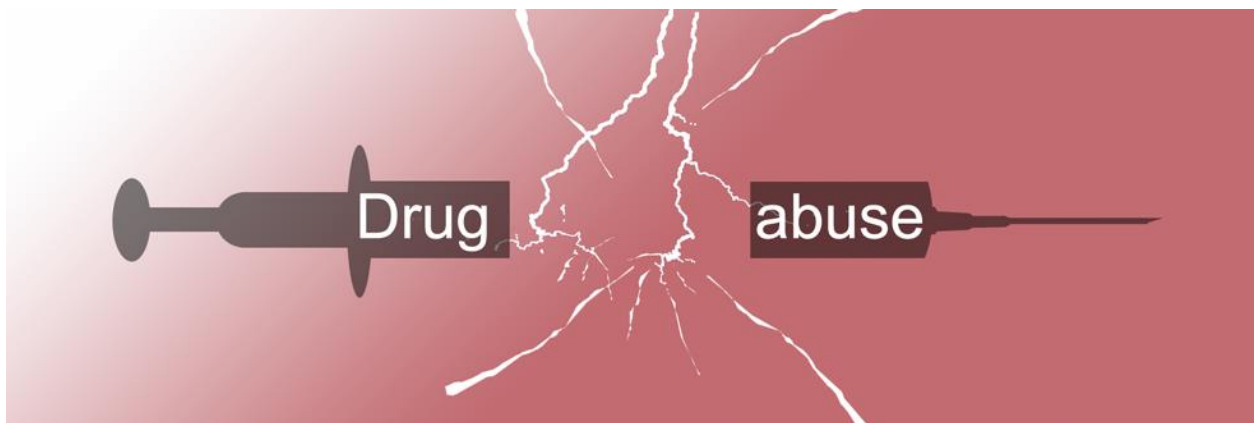


The term youth participation and youth involvement are often used interchangeably. Youth participation is the active and meaningful involvement of young people in various activities within their communities that have a bearing to their well-being. The main aim of this participation is to ensure that they are free to involve themselves in the social and developmental process and that self-involvement is voluntary, active and informed.

Young people can only make safe, informed, and responsible decisions through active participation and empowerment in matters that affect them. Youth organizations are important platforms for developing skills necessary for effective participation in society. The international community has reaffirmed its

commitment to youth participation through the United Nations general assembly resolution 58/133.

## YOUTH AND DRUG USE



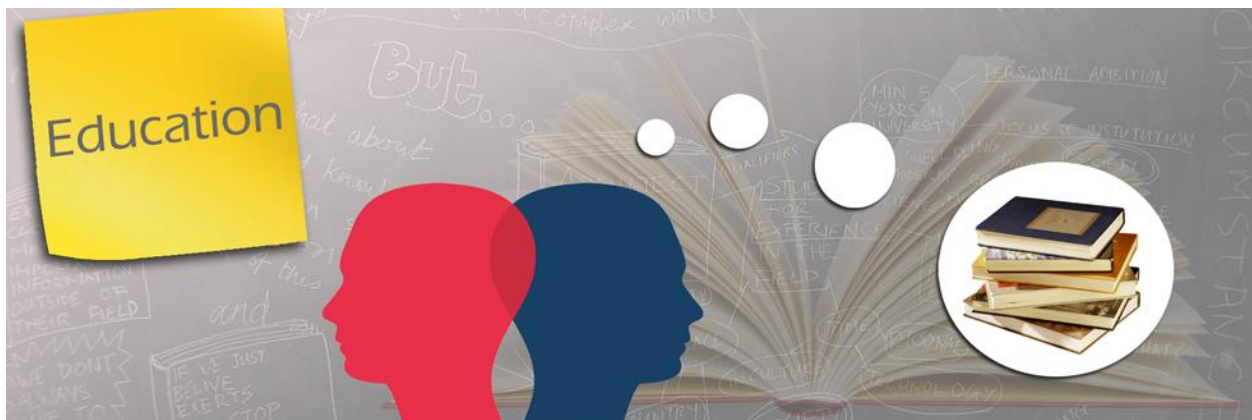
Consumption of drugs is said to be abusive if users use them for recreational motives rather than for their medical benefits. Drugs that are consumed for recreational reasons contain psychoactive substances which stimulate feelings and give pleasure or excitement. Statistics show that a large number of youth is involved in this illicit abuse of substances. In 2010 alone, around 210 million people, youth inclusive, were predicted to take illicit substances at least once. Youth are at both ends of the drug trade, they are involved from the manufacturing to the consumption, their main positions being traffickers, dealers and consumers.

Drug abusing youths are vulnerable to horrible health issues that may spiral to death. Due to consumption of illegal substance, youth face various challenges like school dropout, which then later affects their employment chances since they lack adequate education. These young

people, most of them turn to the world of crime so that they can be able to maintain their addiction. Not only abusers face hardships due to drugs, those that are involved in trafficking and dealing with these substances are prone to jail time because the fight against drugs is at large worldwide, with some countries going to the extent of exercising capital punishment for possession of drugs.

Drug abuse among youth is traceable through many possible causes. There are a couple of fundamental influential causes which drag youth deeper into involvement with drugs. They are; poverty, personal factors, great drug-availability, influence from peers and family, school-based influences, economic, social and community-derived factors. As impacts of drug-abuse are devastating and its causes are commonly encountered daily by youth, many stakeholders are concerned toward this issue. Responses of stakeholders including international, government, NGO, media and even youth themselves show their intention of raising awareness towards the danger of drug involvement among youth.

## YOUTH AND EDUCATION



Education plays a very crucial factor in developing the creative thinking ability of young people and providing all the necessary skills and knowledge that are required to shape a competitive and productive individual. Generally, education helps young people to prepare themselves for challenges that they are going to face during adulthood.

The educational crisis among youth has been provoked by several sub-crises like low enrolment rate in primary and secondary education, poor education quality, issues of gender imparity that are related to educational access and cases of

neglected informal education programs over formal education. Impacts of these sub- crises on the youth include unemployment, underemployment, health issues, low growth in nation's economy and they are barriers in promoting women's rights, self-expression and civic engagement. Good education unleashes potential but with the absence of it, many opportunities that young people would have benefited from will be forgone.

Different stakeholders have been working towards an educated population, with youth being their main concern. Policies have been put in place to promote education and its benefits to young people. Various governments and private sector entities have sponsorship programs that are aimed at helping the less fortunate to afford education. The media has also launched many educational programs as a way to promote education among youth.

## YOUTH AND HEALTH



Healthy and happy adolescents are in a better place to give out and to be the pillars and strengths of their societies as young citizens notwithstanding the major shifts occurring in the world they are about to inherit. It is not arguable that the youth represent one of the healthiest population groups as compared to other age groups.

The majority of youth have health issues that arise from bad habits and poor hygiene, persistent behavioral risks, poor basic sanitation, and new and emerging diseases. All these contribute to a deadly mix that is changing the classic picture of healthy youth. Other factors that contribute to youth health issues include

accidents and injuries including those caused by insecurity, war and occupation. In all countries, whether developing, transitional or developed, disabilities and acute and chronic illnesses are often induced or compounded by economic hardship, unemployment, sanctions, embargoes, poverty or poorly distributed wealth. The cumulative toll of violence, HIV/AIDS and now tuberculosis on youth is adding to the already heavy price still being paid by child victims of malaria and vaccine-preventable diseases.

## YOUTH AND POVERTY



Poverty is a worldwide predicament, no continent nor is any society immune to it. It deprives people of their basic human needs and it hinders community development and in the process spiraling various youth issues. Families cannot afford to take their children to school and in the long run this leads to the children loitering the streets and will more than often resort to crime related activities because they lack the skills and knowledge to get proper employment. Apart from education, resources like food, clean water and healthcare are not really accessible to the poor communities, leading to illnesses that usually end up taking the lives of these young people and that of their relatives. Youth who endure growing up in poverty ridden communities are usually prone to suffer from social discrimination and exclusion which affects their emotional wellbeing. There are more social ills linked to poverty like teenage pregnancy and child bearing which is more prominent in poorer communities than in wealthy communities, the same goes for child marriages and HIV knowledge among youths. Statistics show that



the number of girls being married before the age of 18 is higher in the poorest regions of the world particularly Eastern Africa, Western Africa and South Central Asia.

There are many factors that lead to poverty; misuse of environment in terms of intensive farming leading to soil erosion, desertification, overgrazing and deforestation that cause a decline in agricultural yields therefore increasing poverty. Economic factors such as, tax haven-related issues and unfair terms of trade may also lead to poverty. Moreover, governance-based factors also contribute to poverty in regard to ineffectiveness in governmental performance, weak rule of law, and mismanagement of funds which are intended to cater for needs of the poor.

Relevant stakeholders have implemented strategies to eradicate poverty. Media fulfills a significant role in responding to and amplifying attitudes and ideas of society toward poverty. On the other hand a concern about poverty towards youth has attracted many non-governmental organizations to contribute through specially designed programs and actions for the purpose of eradicating poverty and poverty related issues suffered by young people. Many governments are also hands-on the matter, they do not only highlight specific attention in a form of a particular initiative; they have various plans in place to eradicate poverty instead.

## YOUTH AND TECHNOLOGY



Information and Communication Technology (ICT) presents both opportunities and challenges in terms of social and development inclusion of youth. Youth tend to be creative, adaptable and innovative hence they stand a greater chance to benefit more from the rapid growth of ICT. The internet is the most used form of ICT by youth. They use it to communicate through chat rooms, social networks and forums. This modern technology has brought about a lot of awareness to youth on issues affecting them like HIV/AIDS, poverty and employment, therefore improving their quality of life and that of their communities. ICT can empower

youth by providing them with the opportunity to overcome distance barriers and socio- economic disadvantage.

Even with its rapid growth, some regions in the world still lack access to Information and Communication Technology with South Asia and sub Saharan Africa with the least user statistics. This is due to the fact that countries in these regions are mostly developing countries and the cost of using this technology is hefty on them. Although a lot of good comes out of their use, disadvantages are still present when it comes to ICT, mostly due to internet crimes committed throughout the world.

Relevant stakeholders are all taking part in bringing ICT awareness among youth as they believe it's a stepping stone towards their growth. With knowledge and use of ICT youth can advance in what they do.