

# Hear our Voice: This is the World Youth Want | EOTO World

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The aim of each Youth Conference was to provide a platform for youth to begin influencing the post-2015 development agenda. Before attending the event, the Youth Delegates organised and conducted research in their communities to assess and analyse the situations, opinions, and aspirations of youth in their communities and nations. World Vision took them through a process of understanding how to select the tools they needed and then, how to craft and use them properly.

After 2 conferences the youth from Afghanistan, Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Cyprus, Georgia, Germany, Kosovo, Lebanon, Occupied Palestinian Territories, and Romania make joint Youth Declaration, including in it the issues that directly affect the youth.

The 9 priority issues identified by Youth aged 13-24 in the above listed countries are:

- Health
- Peace
- Education
- Equality
- Employment
- Environment
- Child Protection
- Child/Youth Participation
- Healthy Habits

**Health.** Healthcare systems worldwide are malfunctioning due to lack of hospitals, medical supplies, poorly or untrained staff, and corruption. The majority of these problems derive from underfunding. For example, the amount of money dedicated to healthcare compared to the country's GDP is 4.7% in Armenia, 5.4% in Romania, and 6% in Cyprus. Youth propose the following measures to be taken by governments:

- Invest more money in order to improve the quality of conditions in hospitals
- Improve the quality of training and education for medical staff
- Build and equip more healthcare centres in rural areas
- Increase wages for medical staff to stop corruption

**Education.** Many students drop out of school because of economic problems, gender stereotypes, violence and underage marriage. In addition, youth are not interested in graduating because they are aware that they do not have employment opportunities. This is demonstrated by high youth emigration rates from Romania, Armenia, Albania, Georgia, and Gaza. When youth do attend school, the quality of education is low and is coupled with high levels of corruption. Youth call for the following actions:

- Build collaboration between government and NGOs to provide programs to raise awareness about the importance of education for all girls and boys
- Organise meetings with parents to discuss the harmful effects of underage marriage and school drop outs
- Create programs to train youth and to create jobs for them after they finish their education
- Enhance, establish, and enforce electronic teacher and student monitoring systems
- Improve security – ensure every child and youth has a safe and proper place to study

**Employment or “Life Opportunities”.** Life opportunities (employment) should be available for all people in this world. Currently, there is a lack of job opportunities which results in youth unemployment and hopelessness. Young people do not have sufficient capacity because they lack work experience or they live under siege and within blockades. The solutions youth recommend are:

- Open more and new work places in private and governmental sectors for young people
- Increase opportunities for youth internships, volunteering, and freelance work
- Support youth-led programs where youth research job opportunities for their peers

**Child Protection.** More and more children every single day suffer from being abused not only by their families but also by their social environment. Evidence shows that since 2010 the number of child deaths per day due to child abuse and neglect has been increased by 5. Many children are stigmatized because they have disabilities, different ethnicities, or because of their religion. As a result, youth recommend:

- Enable peer educators to raise awareness about child abuse and not to discriminate against children with differences
- Governments should establish help-lines where abused children can call and ask for support from specialists
- Introduce activities, programs, and camps where children interact with each other, thus making them feel secure, accepted and equal

**Healthy Habits.** Youth in our countries have lots of bad habits such as smoking, drinking alcohol, and drug addiction. There are teenagers who feel hopeless or experience social abuse that lead them into negative coping habits like cutting and attempted suicide. Youth recommend the following:

- Create hotlines where young people can talk to someone and get help
- Invest in rehabilitation programs for youth who consume drugs instead of putting them in jail
- Support youth-led campaigns to raise family and youth awareness about the harmful effects of drugs

**Peace.** All countries need peace, stability, freedom and national unity. Countries with weapons and power kill people of other countries. The earth should not be a jungle where the strong survives. War causes inequality. Weak nations, determined by less power and weapons, do not have healthy water to drink because their economies are controlled by occupying countries. War affects people like, Palestinians who are banned from having the convenience of travelling, having an airport and even enjoying the beach. Youth are also not free to practice their religion without challenges. Youth recommend the following:

- Pressure should be placed upon governments to support civil society
- Youth conduct awareness raising campaigns about how war affects countries
- International partnerships must be created to help poor countries

**Equality.** Youth want equality for orphans so they can be integrated into society after they are coming out of the orphanage. Youth want equality for prisoners so they can be reintegrated into society after their time in prison. Youth want equality for both genders so men and women have the same status of education, job opportunities, and every part of life. Youth want equality for people with disabilities so they can have equal status in society and have a normal role in daily life. Youth recommend the following:

- Promote positive role models and use personal stories of overcoming challenges to build bridges of understanding
- Youth conduct public education campaigns on equality, inclusion and non-discrimination, especially among schools
- Increase and enhance educational opportunities, including vocational training, internships, and employment support for youth transitioning out of institutions

**Environment or “Going Green”.** Trees are being cut illegally. In Lebanon, during the last 40 years, more than 35% of existing forest coverage has deteriorated. Our air is being polluted by the smoke of factories and vehicles. Many of the sewage systems are undersized in relation to the population that they serve. Therefore, youth propose the following:

- Youth should conduct public awareness campaigns and calls for the public to plant trees, clean the beaches, use garbage cans, and ride bicycles
- Youth and communities can initiate clean-up programs using Facebook to recruit volunteers
- Send a message (including incentives) for big companies to help youth in environmental efforts
- Increase penalties for companies that cause pollution.

**Child/Youth Participation or “Youth Voice”.** With power, self-belief and passion for life, youth aim to build a society where children are protected and able to capture the world. Youth are the future, which means that youth have a responsibility to make this world a better place to live. However, youth do not feel listened to. Nation states are accumulating debts that the younger generation will have to pay for. Nation states should include youth in their decision making processes. Youth suggest:

- Organise groups of young people to raise their voices and take action for change
- Use TV, radio, and the internet to raise youth voices
- Youth should partner with NGOs who work to include youth in decision making processes

It is time that the voices of youth around the world are heard and taken into account. Youth have something to contribute. Youth are full of energy waiting to be transformed into action. Youth are asking you to lift the barriers; they need your help and promise to take action upon these recommendations. Let us trust and support one another to achieve success together.