



YGL Youth Task Force: Global Redesign Initiative



If Youth Could Redesign the World . . .

Report Prepared by the Youth Task Force, an initiative of the Young Global Leaders
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Further details can be found online at: http://taskforce.tigweb.org/ygl_youth



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Executive Summary

As Young Global Leaders in contemplating our greatest contribution to the World Economic Forum Global Redesign Initiative, we recognized our unique access and ability to influence decision-makers and identified our potential role as a bridge to channel the voices, visions and actions of youth as part of the global process. We agreed that ensuring meaningful youth participation is essential for the following key reasons:

1. Young people will inherit the world we create today and need to be part of the process of envisioning and shaping the future. It is only when youth are seen as part of the solution, rather than part of the problem, that long-term change can occur. There are huge costs associated with disengaged youth. The risks include a rise in unemployment, violence, depression and extensive social problems.
2. Creativity is critical for the next stage of the economy. Young people have a unique, innovative and fresh perspective on issues and can provide valuable insight into thinking about the problems of the world and how to solve them in new ways. As Albert Einstein once said, we cannot solve our problems with the same thinking that created our problems.
3. This generation of young people have grown up in the digital age with unprecedented access to information and opportunities for influence. Youth are among the most socially conscious and active segments of the population. They are highly affected by and concerned about social and environmental issues.

In the fall of 2009, we formed the Youth Task Force and launched a global campaign and created spaces for youth to participate across two mediums:

- » **A series of 30 town hall meetings in 20 countries around the world with over 1000 participants.** The participants were from urban and rural areas, various religious and class backgrounds, and ranged in age from 8 to 25. Where possible, young people created and led the town hall meetings. In some cases, conversations were facilitated by Young Global Leaders.
- » **Online.** Young people were invited to participate in ongoing online forums over a 6 week period on a dedicated Youth Task Force website. Over 1000 visitors to the site participated in 170 online discussions. They also continued the conversation on other social media platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube.

The voices and opinions of these diverse young people are strategically summarized and presented in this report according to the six pillars of the Global Redesign Initiative as identified in 2009. These findings will be presented at World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Davos 2010, to both bring forth the key ideas that emerged through this process as well as inspire world leaders to further connect with youth.

Beyond the themes identified within each pillar, our key conclusions are as follows:

1. As their statements reveal, youth from across the globe have a strong hold on both national and international problems. Their clear deliverance of recommendations, commitments and presentation of call to action is an inspiring sign that youth around the world are eager and desiring to play a larger role in the world and their voices should be heard if we truly want to address and fix the ills of our world.
2. Their proposed solutions are all within reach and require intergenerational leadership across all aspects of society. Their ideas require shifting resources, shifting priorities, and thinking more long term. A greater investment of financial resources is also required for youth to be empowered to implement their ideas and develop community based projects and solutions.
3. Young people involved in this process, enjoyed being heard and being invited to take part in shaping the future. Universally, people asked how they could participate in these global redesign efforts in a larger, more sustained manner. Simply, there is a strong desire for young people to be part of shaping the world they are set to inherit. They want to learn, listen, and lead.

I. Creating a Value Framework

Ironically, in a forum meant to extract their opinions, the loudest message from young people was that they felt their voices were not heard. Again and again, young people from around the world said the same thing: we do not feel that we are part of the decision making process. Youth do not feel that our well-being and opinions are valued. Generally speaking, the young people from rural areas tended to propose solutions based on family and society values, while the young people from or attending college in urban areas, had a more “global view”, calling out international institutions like the United Nations and inequalities between people of different countries, races and religions. Also, students identified the following global values as respect, solidarity, justice, tolerance and honesty.

Problem Statement

Youth internationally reported that investment in youth is less of a priority for adults: there is lack of guidance and mentorship in aiding youth with career planning, family planning and for successful adulthood generally.

Recommendations

To address the issue of youth feeling being undervalued it is recommended that there be greater political representation of young people in the political and decision making process. It is also greatly encourages that there be increased funding for mentorship programs and increased value placed on the importance of mentoring young people, and having an exchange where youth also mentor adult decision-makers.

Quotes from young people

“Schools and community organizations should partner to provide more mentors for students, e.g. create an adopt a school program.”

- Los Angeles, United States

“We all know that the present condition of the country is not good, but we should not stop trying from our level to make the most out of the situation. One has to be creative and innovative to find ways out of this chaos.”

- Kathmandu, Nepal

“Everything starts and ends with education.”

- Haifa, Israel

“Create community centres and media campaigns to teach and practice values as well as reinforce home-learned values at school.”

-Mexico City, Mexico

“Encourage people to get to know and to appreciate their neighbors, whether it be within a village, within a country or within a continent. It is far easier to hate or fear that which one does not know.”

- Bogotá, Colombia

“We propose to constitute a voluntary Value Rating system represented and advised from Ministries of Education, Culture and Sciences of all nations which will give ratings for films, television shows, and music and published goods. Rating process will give Value Stars for internationally accepted common values. We also propose a global anthem to be translated into every official language that can serve as a symbol of global friendship and peaceful life in universally shared values. It would be performed at various world events, international meetings and conferences.”

- Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

“Be a life-long learner, embrace ideas, avoid ideology, vote, encourage others to vote and research issues to be an informed voter.”

- Nova Scotia, Canada

“I commit to reviewing my values with regards the things I consider as my priorities. I commit to seeing myself as an embodiment of empowerment for my generation. I commit to being more active in my community”.

- Lagos, Nigeria

“Youth should help create awareness by raising their own voices and advocating to their government representatives.”

- Kakata City, Liberia

II. Building Effective Institutions

Young people expressed dismay at the fact that science and technology has progressed so much, and yet our basic institutions seem to lag behind and fail young people in important ways. They lamented that education systems, even in the richest countries, fail to provide equal opportunity for all and that literacy rates around the world are still shockingly low. They also spoke of cemented class systems, lack of job opportunities, and the consequent effect on their families.

Problem Statement

Educational institutions are failing to provide real, tangible opportunities for young people to thrive, and standards need to be set for high quality personalized learning experiences.

Recommendations

It is recommended that education institutions transmit practical knowledge like how to manage money, deal with conflict, care for babies, how to grow and prepare food and other life skills. In addition, funding for education be proportionate to population size and should prioritize the use of technology.

Quotes from young people

"Define a standard of education and make it available to everyone."

- New York, United States

"Youth should take advantage of all available learning facilities. Youth have to be active in requesting and sourcing training opportunities, and take advantage of them. Youth should continue to advocate for educational infrastructure to their local government representatives."

- Kakata City, Liberia

"China should establish its own development agency and serve as a positive force to make international organizations more accountable and responsive. Chinese government should encourage its citizens to work in international organizations so that they can perform as "bridges" between China and the broader development community."

- Beijing, China

"Commit to creating a group with educational purposes that visits schools in order to explore and make children aware of the issues that affect society... 'I commit to going to schools to transmit my knowledge on... climatic changes, the government's problems, the swine flu and to be able to exert certain influence on children and create awareness.'"

- Buenos Aires, Argentina

Create a program where you can get free education in return for national service / volunteering for the community and similar activities

- Haifa, Israel

"Reinforce respect for all citizens according to democratic principles."

- Western Province, Rwanda

"Educate people about human rights and strengthen measures to denounce and to punish those institutions or individuals who violate human rights."

- Bogotá, Colombia

"The Ministry of Culture and Youth - Create artistic centers to discover and support talented youth and children."

- Amman, Jordan

"Provide safe spaces for children to play. At present, most children are playing in inappropriate playgrounds and are constantly facing risks, including the risk of traffic accidents, which sometimes leads to death. Also, reconsider the allocation of schools so girl's schools are not isolated to the outskirts of the camp."

- Baqa Camp, Jordan

III. Strengthening Economies

Young people are keenly aware that their economic security is not guaranteed. In fact, they worry about what kind of jobs—or if any jobs at all—will be available to them. They are also concerned about the impact of economic security on peace and stability, immigration patterns, and values more generally. Many believed a major issue in the economy is the high dependence on oil trade. They also pointed that local economies are depending more and more on transnational enterprises, a fact that, in their opinion, make financial markets more volatile and unstable.

Problem Statement

Young people felt that economic issues such as overdependence on oil, high unemployment rates and immigration will be the cause of continued political instability and violence.

Recommendations

In order to strengthen economies around the world young people recommended that we teach them marketable skills ranging from trades to entrepreneurship. Secondly, we then need to invest in women as a means of strengthening local economies. Third, governments need to develop ways to foster a healthy, strong labor force, provide health care, and develop anti-gang programs readily available to young people. And fourth, governments need to facilitate young people's access to microfinance credits and investing in social entrepreneurs.

Quotes from young people

"Make the most of trade agreements between countries, so that national economies would benefit."
- Mexico City, Mexico

"We must fight the influence of wide-spread corruption and foster the creation of a 'social conscience.'"
- Bogotá, Colombia

"Local government and the business community should collaborate to provide greater employment opportunities for youth, e.g. year-round internships."
- Los Angeles, United States

"Government should initiate a youth opportunity fund in the budget to target youths initiatives."
- Soroti, Uganda

"Create jobs around the world but not at the expense of labor standards."
- New York, United States

"Improve young entrepreneurs' managerial skills (support from the government through youth training."
- Western Province, Rwanda

"There is a need to strengthen the economic independence of women; extend and entrench a woman's right to divorce; invest more in the education of women; expand micro lending; and promote female role models. (Interestingly, all of the women in this group opposed affirmative action programs.)"
- Nova Scotia, Canada

"Keep looking for voluntary chances as a good way to get a good job later on."
- Amman, Jordan

"Create at least 500,000 job opportunities for young people through vocational skills, provision of microfinance and other resources within 2010."
- Lagos, Nigeria

"By diversifying economic activities in non-mining sectors, we can avoid an overdependence on the boom-bust cycle of a global commodity market. Young people will have more opportunities to contribute and work in interested fields."
- Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

IV. Mitigating Global Risks & Addressing Systematic Failures

Young people expressed serious concern about systematic failures and the ability of governments to respond to major foreseen and unforeseen global risks. They fear a wide range of negative influences and expressed grave concern that current systems would be capable of adequately mitigating these risks.

Problem Statement

In response to Global Risks and Systematic Failures of greatest importance young people as a whole believed that: world poverty, population growth, spread of disease, the environment, global economic stability, social justice, war on terror, combating religious intolerance were the top concerns.

Recommendations

According to youth to best address this issue as a world we must focus on prevention. The youth urge adults and government leaders to spend time addressing these issues with us now, while we are young. Youth also suggested that there be an investment in long term solutions, not just short term remedies. Finally the youth encourage world leaders to be aware of the fact that practices in some parts of the world have grave effect on other parts of the world. That the impact of your actions are no longer confined to your own borders. Consequently, there is a need for more global; treaties—and enforcement of those treaties.

Quotes from young people

"Ensure all have access to aid and health care. Prevention is always better than the cure and preemptive steps and processes must always be taken to protect individuals and regions. Part of this would be learning from the past and a strong focus on global solutions to global problems."

- London, United Kingdom

"Analyze the problem before informing the people to avoid chaos."

"Create and reinforce prevention culture to reduce risk of global crisis."

- Monterrey, Mexico

"The general consensus was that Multinational Corporations have too much power and have a duty to act responsibly. Some said that this duty must not impinge on their ability to be profitable, innovative, and successful (note from WB, this alludes to Charles Tilly's development conundrum of 'how to prevent the emergence of large scale, collective violence and sustain human progress')."

"Prevention is always better than the cure and preemptive steps and processes must always be taken to protect individuals and regions."

- London, United Kingdom

"More needs to be done in the area of AIDS/HIV education and prevention for young people and by young people"

- Cincinnati, United States

"Government should institutionalize structures that reach and serve the masses. These institutions will include free or affordable housing, fuel subsidy, and food."

- Lagos, Nigeria

"Carry out sensitizations on HIV and AIDS in our community."

- Soroti, Uganda

"Fund more medical facilities as well as programs that create awareness about HIV/AIDS prevention and also reduce stigma."

- Kakata City, Liberia

"Communication is a key element to building effective institutions. Encourage an effective and transparent organizational communication, especially between leaders and staff."

- Mexico City, Mexico

V. Ensuring Sustainability

For this pillar, the youth focused on the environment, specifically, what kind of planet they will inherit? They expressed concern over use of natural resources, creation and disposal of waste, and the general impact of human practices from war to energy usage to consumption.

Problem Statement

Current global leaders and institutions are making policy and taking actions that threaten the long term health of the planet.

Recommendations [young people had the most practical advice in this category]

The recommendations on ensuring sustainability revealed just how knowledgeable young people are on the depth of this issue. Young people undoubtedly had the most practical advice in this category. The first recommendation made was curbing CO2 levels through prohibitions, economics incentives, and the creation of alternatives. The second recommendation encourages set global standards for garbage recycling and landfill usage, as well as water filtration. Third, the youth recommended that more family planning information and resources be provided to all. Finally, they suggested that there be specific allocations of water, energy and other natural resources according to population size, not economics. To ensure the success of these recommendations young people stressed heavily the need for dialogue and participation in efficiently executing each recommendation.

Quotes from young people

"Reduce use of toxic pesticides."

"Use sanitary landfills."

"Use cars with little production of CO2, and good quality refined fuel."

"Use different energy power instead of fuel (e.g., the sun and water resources)."

- Beddawi, Lebanon

"Push for self-sustaining communities around the world by guaranteeing a quality education and food and water."

- New York, United States

"Sensitize youth to ensure massive participation in democratic elections for better change."

"Youth must take ownership of the family planning policy and sensitize parents and local governments."

"Youth can increase their involvement in agricultural production."

"Youth can initiate discussions around patriotism, etc. within the population."

- Western Province, Rwanda

"All living things must be treated with respect. If we allow pollution and dumping of trash, waste and hazardous materials into the oceans, seas and rivers, we are not respecting the environment or its inhabitants."

- Tokyo, Japan

"Two things Indians are used to – low prices and shortcuts. These two reasons posed as barriers toward adoption of sustainable methods. Educated people must lead by example – that this was an issue that would fall on deaf ears of the illiterate populace."

- Mumbai, India

"Is water a commodity or right? There needs to be increased conservation programs; a further development of desalination and sterilization plants; and a democratization of water technology. Also, water cannot be polluted as an act of warfare."

- Nova Scotia, Canada

"Tax companies or individuals for not recycling and reward discounts that are attached to recycling bills. Design a special bin that would make people feel guilty if they don't recycle."

- Singapore

VI. Enhancing Security

In addition to concern about war, terrorism, and other violence, young people expressed concern about being denied the right to social freedoms and being persecuted for holding certain beliefs or being of a certain orientation. Youth are also concerned that the international community has yet to take a firm stand against human trafficking (which often means the trade of young people) and genocide.

Problem Statement

In recent years we have seen increasing attention being paid to the issue of security. Regarding energy security, there are a number of concerns such as (though not limited to): oil and other fossil fuel depletion (peak oil, etc); reliance on foreign sources of energy, geopolitics (such as supporting dictatorships, rising terrorism, "stability" of nations that supply energy sources), energy needs of poorer countries, and demands from advancing developing countries such as China and India. In today's changing society, the issues of Internet security and human trafficking are also of growing concern.

Recommendations

Most people are not aware of the current crisis. Even though everyone is talking about it, there is not a clear understanding of what the problem is, and more important what the potential solutions are. Re-structure the way poor countries accept foreign investment / help, especially in the energy field. There needs to be better allocated ways to address the need for renewable energies. Students creatively encourage the development of internet based energy encyclopedias. Other suggestions centered heavily around giving tax breaks or other incentives to citizens who come up with solutions that prove to work once are implemented. Make foreign investment more efficient when it comes to funding new projects.

Quotes from young people

"There should be a 'Wikipedia' of 'Green Energy' and 'energy security' which is built by people knowledgeable in the space. Then, this website should be promoted in every school and university as part of the curricula."

"Make foreign investment more efficient when it comes to funding new projects. An idea could be to incentivize entrepreneurs in poorer countries."

-Guatemala City, Guatemala

"There should be more rules deployed on the Internet, for example Artificial Intelligence Internet police and Internet government."

- Singapore

"Human Trafficking is becoming an increasingly relevant issue globally."

"Overconsumption of alcohol is a major issue in the world. Families break up and children get hurt because of uncontrolled usage of alcohol. We propose a worldwide campaign to prevent alcohol addiction through systematic public awareness, educational campaigns, and sports activities and artistic expressions that substitute drug consumptions."

- Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

"Government should take steps to prioritize the eradication of bad practices especially corruption. One of such steps should include the naming and shaming of culprits; placing embargoes for the refusal of visas to corrupt Nigerians."

- Lagos, Nigeria

"I wish to expose corruption by being a citizen reporter and by capturing incidents of corruption and sending it to the media. I will also start to be responsible for this change by stopping to bribe the traffic police no matter how easy that makes my life."

- Mumbai, India

"Safety is an important factor in providing a good education for children. If schools and educational facilities are not safe, then the level of education will suffer."

- Yokohama, Japan

"Students consider corruption and unemployment to be the main detonators of insecurity. Unemployment turns desperate people into criminals, since they see no other option to support their families."

- Mexico City, Mexico

Conclusion and Next Steps

In conclusion, young people around the world are calling upon world leaders to:

- » Prioritize the inclusion and participation of youth in decision-making processes
- » Commit to innovation and high quality standards in education
- » Invest in local businesses and young social entrepreneurs
- » Focus on prevention in health and in addressing security issues while enforcing global treaties
- » Reduce dependence on oil and change destructive consumption patterns through policies
- » Uphold human rights and take a strong stand against genocide and human trafficking

As senior decision-makers who are focused on shaping initiatives to redesign the world, we invite you to make a commitment to including youth as part of designing and implementing solutions. As a follow-up initiative to the 2009 Town Hall Meetings and consultations, the Youth Task Force will be carrying out an initiative to support decision-makers to more effectively engage youth.

Please take the time ask yourself the following questions:

- » Do I believe in the importance of investing in youth?
- » What were the early influences in my life that inspired my own leadership?
- » How frequently do I ask young people in my family and organization for their opinion and how seriously do I take their ideas when they are shared with me?
- » How regularly do I take the time to mentor youth, share experiences and offer opportunities in both my personal and professional life?
- » Do I actively offer leadership development opportunities for youth in my organization?
- » Does my organization support community based groups that focus on youth empowerment?
- » Does our board of directors include a young person?
- » Do we consider young people to be important stakeholders for our organization and if so, what is our strategy for their involvement in helping us to design our products/services/processes?
- » Does my organization have a youth advisory group that we regularly consult?
- » Do we invest financial resources to support youth-led projects that address community problems?

Our **wish** for Davos 2010 is that you will make a commitment to youth and take into consideration the recommendations highlighted in this report. We encourage you to create effective spaces where youth can participate and express themselves, where also leaders commit directly with youth in taking actions to address and follow up their concerns and ideas. We also invite you to endorse the 5% for the Future Campaign, an effort that grew from the aids2031 young leaders summit that aims inspire leaders of HIV/AIDS development funds to allocate 5% towards youth-led projects and initiatives in response the pandemic, with a particular focus on prevention projects as well as those addressing issues of stigma and discrimination.

We hope you will join in supporting the efforts of the Youth Task Force!

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