

# THE FUTURE OF HUMAN RIGHTS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS 75 YOUTH DECLARATION

*Inputs by Youth Focused Organization: Ark and Rainbow Missions  
Location: Nigeria, Sub/Saharan Africa.*

## 1. CHALLENGES

The world is facing several challenges which are peculiar to youths, especially those between the ages of 18–30. Although these challenges vary depending on region or continent, race, gender or disabilities, there are quite a number of challenges that are faced generally irrespective of the continent.

Ark and Rainbow Movement is a non governmental organization in Nigeria that provides project management support and consultation for other organizations with focus on leadership, capacity building and good governance. We design programs that advance democratic values and strengthen inclusion of youths and women in leadership and civic engagement. With over 10 years experience, we have compiled the following as challenges faced by youths which include:

- **Access to Education and Employment:** African youths face a high level of lack of education and employment, especially those who live in underserved communities. This can be as a result of poverty, religion and illiteracy. Unemployment on the other hand leads to more levels of poverty and insecurity.
- **Mental Health and Social Pressure:** Mental health problems occur as a result of anxiety and depression. Unfortunately, Africa is yet to embrace the culture of seeking mental health assistance, as anyone who does is deemed to need a psychiatrist. Social Pressure ranging from peer pressure, social expectations and the need to fit in can also cause mental health challenges.
- **Access to health and Financial Empowerment:** Access to healthcare

is quite expensive, and government established health facilities are not equipped with all necessary medical care resources, both human and material resources. This keeps leading to high rate of health related challenges, and lack of financial empowerment makes it difficult for the youth to seek private medical consultants.

- ▶ **Leadership and Political Engagement:** As an organization that designs several youth and women based projects to increase civic engagement and political participation, this is a major challenge faced by youths. There is a huge gap between those in power and the citizens, who systematically face levels of marginalization and discrimination. As a result of lack of inclusion in leadership positions, policy-making and decision-making processes, youths and women are left behind.

## **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Advancing human rights in the future requires partnership and collaboration between state governments, the United Nations (UN), civil society, and other stakeholders. Here are some strategies that governments and the UN can employ to promote human rights in the years to come:

- ▶ **Strengthening of Legal Frameworks:** Governments should always enforce laws that protect and promote human rights, aligning with international treaties and conventions. They should also ensure that legislation addresses emerging human rights challenges related to all necessary evolving issues.
- ▶ **Accountability Mechanisms:** There should be proper measures in place to hold governments and individuals accountable for human rights violations, including effective judicial systems and access to justice for all. Civil Society Organizations must be ready to do this without succumbing to pressure or intimidation.
- ▶ **Education and Digital Awareness:** Human rights education needs to

be promoted in schools and communities to raise awareness and foster a culture of respect for human rights from an early age. We should also learn to embrace the positive sides of digital spaces in advancing freedom of expression and information in the digital space.

- ▶ **Civil Society Engagement, Inclusion and Equality** There should be constant support of civil society organizations, human rights defenders, and grassroots movements, allowing them to operate freely and advocate for human rights. Social inclusion and equality frameworks that address marginalization, segregation, biases, barriers, discrimination and disparities based on race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, and other factors must be encouraged.
- ▶ **Multilateral Cooperation, Sustainable Development and Global Partnerships:** International cooperation and collaboration among countries should be encouraged, to address global challenges that impact human rights, such as pandemics, migration, and transnational crime. Human rights goals need to be aligned either necessary Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to ensure that development efforts benefit all, and no one is left behind. To ensure this, partnerships with international organizations, NGOs, businesses, and other stakeholders has to be leveraged upon.
- ▶ **Youth Engagement:** There should be conscious engagement of young people in decision-making processes and actions related to human rights, by recognizing the vital role they play in shaping the future.

### **3. COMMITMENTS AND ACTIONS BY YOUNG PEOPLE**

Sustainable Development Goals isn't the role of state governments, the United Nations (UN), civil society, alone. Youths who face these challenges must also be involved in ensuring peacebuilding processes and frameworks. Advancing human rights is a role everyone needs to

perform.

Youths must be ready and willing to volunteer their time and resources for this advancement.

Volunteering is a key focus which the United Nations uses to improve youth development. If youths are not able to have access to UN agencies on state or national levels, they can work with civil society organizations to learn skills and improve in capacity building.

Collaboration and Partnerships is one of the most important Sustainable Development Goals which all youths led organizations should learn to focus on. Strengthening human right values and advocating for the fundamental rights of people needs organizations to work together, by bringing their strengths at work. That way, they can make more impacts together.

Youths must also work with civil society organizations to hold governments accountable at all levels: local government or municipality, state, regional or national.

Finally, youths should learn to create all forms of awareness as a means to advance human rights. We must learn to do better and create a world that strives on inclusion of youth and women. Civic engagement programs during election should be a joint force by all youths and no one must be left behind. When youths, women and person with disabilities strengthen themselves, the result is a force which cannot be overlooked. A similar case study was the effect of the just concluded General Elections in Nigeria, where the youths used social media to market a unanimous candidate.

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