

REACHOUT SALONE



OHCHR is soliciting views from youth-led and youth-focused organizations and institutions on the present and future of human rights, which, together with the outcomes of the Global Youth Consultation, will inform the development of the Human Rights 75 Youth Declaration.

Key questions and types of input/comments sought

Youth-led and youth-focused organizations and institutions are asked to provide their views on the following questions:

1. What are the challenges the world is facing now? How they will affect the future of human rights, what future do you want for human rights?

The world is currently facing numerous challenges that will undoubtedly impact the future of human rights. These challenges include but are not limited to global inequality, climate change, political instability, technological advancements, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. These issues have far-reaching consequences for human rights, both in Sierra Leone and globally.

In the context of Sierra Leone, one of the main challenges is the issue of poverty and economic inequality. Despite significant progress in recent years, Sierra Leone still grapples with widespread poverty and inequality, with a large percentage of the population living below the poverty line. This poses a threat to the enjoyment of basic human rights such as access to education, healthcare, and adequate housing.

Another major challenge in Sierra Leone is the issue of gender inequality. Women and girls often face discrimination, limited access to education and healthcare, and are at an increased risk of gender-based violence. This not only violates fundamental human rights but also prevents the country from achieving its full potential by excluding half of its population from active participation in socio-political and economic processes.

Furthermore, environmental degradation and climate change have significant implications for human rights in Sierra Leone. The country is particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, including rising sea levels, increased frequency of natural disasters, and food insecurity. These challenges not only impact the right to a clean and sustainable environment but also exacerbate existing vulnerabilities and inequalities in society.

In light of these challenges, the future of human rights in Sierra Leone and the world at large should aim for a more inclusive, just, and sustainable future. This means addressing inequality and poverty by ensuring equitable access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities for all individuals, regardless of their socio-economic background.

Additionally, the promotion of gender equality is crucial for upholding human rights. It involves empowering women and girls, eliminating gender-based violence, ensuring equal access to education and healthcare, and promoting their meaningful participation in decision-making processes.

Finally, addressing climate change is essential for securing a future where human rights are protected. This involves adopting sustainable development practices, investing in renewable energy, promoting environmental conservation, and building resilience to climate-related challenges.

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To achieve this vision, it is crucial to involve youth-led and youth-focused organizations and institutions in policymaking and decision-making processes. The perspectives and voices of young people are invaluable in shaping an inclusive and sustainable future for human rights in Sierra Leone and worldwide.

- *What future do you want for human rights?*

My future hope for human rights is that they are universally respected, protected, and fulfilled. In this ideal future, all people would have access to necessities like food, water, and shelter, as well as education, healthcare, and meaningful work for youth. Human rights violations would be rare, and those that did occur would be swiftly addressed and remedied. People would feel safe and secure in their communities, regardless of their race, gender, sexuality, or beliefs. And everyone would have a voice and a say in decisions that affect their lives. That's my vision!

2. Recommendations, commitments and actions young people take towards advancing human rights in the future:

To address the challenges, the world is facing and advances human rights in the future; here are some recommendations for decision-makers, policymakers, and various organizations:

- **Promote Youth Inclusion:** Decision-makers should actively involve youth-led and youth-focused organizations in policy-making processes. This includes empowering young people to participate in decision-making and ensuring their voices are heard and valued.
- **Enhance Education:** Governments and international organizations should prioritize quality education that promotes human rights values, fosters critical thinking, and equips young people with the skills to address societal challenges effectively.
- **Strengthen Legal Frameworks:** Policymakers should ensure that legal frameworks effectively protect human rights and provide avenues for redress. This includes advocating for comprehensive anti-discrimination laws and strengthening laws that safeguard the rights of marginalized groups.
- **Foster Youth Empowerment:** Governments and civil society organizations should create platforms and opportunities for young people to engage, express their opinions, and actively contribute to shaping policies and programs that affect them. This can be done through youth representation in decision-making bodies, mentorship programs, and skills development initiatives.
- **Ensure Equitable Access:** Efforts should be made to ensure equitable access to resources, including healthcare, education, and economic opportunities, for all young people. Decision-makers should work towards eliminating disparities and creating an inclusive society that values and respects the rights of all individuals.

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In terms of what commitments and actions young people can take towards advancing human rights in the future, here are a few recommendations:

Raise Awareness: Young people can educate themselves about human rights issues and raise awareness among their peers and communities. This can be through social media campaigns, organizing workshops, or participating in advocacy efforts.

Engage in Advocacy: Young people have the power to advocate for policy changes and promote human rights at all levels. This can involve speaking up for marginalized groups, engaging with local and national government officials, and supporting youth-led initiatives that promote human rights.

Support and Join Youth Organizations: Young people can actively support and join existing youth-led organizations and institutions that work towards advancing human rights. By joining forces, they can amplify their impact and advocate for change collectively.

Embrace Diversity and Inclusion: Young people can work towards creating inclusive spaces that embrace diversity and celebrate the rights of all individuals. This includes challenging discrimination, fostering empathy and understanding, and actively promoting equality and inclusion within their communities.

Use Technology for Good: Young people can leverage the power of technology to advance human rights. They can use social media platforms to share stories, raise awareness, and mobilize support for causes related to human rights.

Young people must engage in these commitments and actions collectively, as unity and collaboration are keys in driving positive change and ensuring a better future for human rights.

What commitments and actions can young people take towards advancing human rights in the future?

Young people can take the following actions to ensure the advancement of human rights in the future:

- Advocate for human rights through education, social media, and activism.
- Participate in civic engagement and political processes, including voting and running for office.
- Volunteer with human rights organizations or initiatives, or create their own.
- Use their purchasing power to support ethical and sustainable businesses.
- Support and amplify the voices of marginalized communities, and stand up against discrimination and hate speech.
- Educate themselves about human rights issues and raise awareness among their peers and communities.
- Promote inter-sectionality and the understanding that human rights are interconnected and universal.
- Use their creative talents, such as art, music, or film, to raise awareness about human rights issues.
- Participate in international exchange programs or internships that focus on human rights.

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- Push for corporate responsibility and hold companies accountable for their impact on human rights.
- Join or start student groups and clubs focused on human rights issues.
- Use their careers and professional skills to support human rights causes.
- Support and participate in movements like Black Lives Matter and Me Too, which advocate for specific human rights issues.
- Call out and challenge discriminatory practices and attitudes, such as racism, sexism, and homophobia.
- Advocate for policy changes at the local, national, and international levels, such as by supporting human rights treaties and conventions.
- Donate to human rights organizations or campaigns.
- Engage in conversations and debates about human rights issues, to foster understanding and respect for diversity.

Submission made by: **Edmond Bangalie Margai** Founder & Executive Director of **REACHOUT SALONE** a registered youth-led indigenous organisation that undertakes advocacy charitable and developmental activities in coastal communities of Sierra Leone.

MISSION STATEMENT WHO WE ARE:

Reaching out the “Deprived and the Needy” in the communities with the quest to provide them with better life opportunities.

VISION WHAT WE DO:

Sustainably developing individuals and communities, protection of their human rights and ensuring their security, making them economically viable and hence breaking the vicious circle of poverty.

GOAL:

Building concrete community structures that enhance the creation of “Equal Opportunities” for the underprivileged and vulnerable communities and hence upgrading their standards of living.

The Declaration reflects an agreement that equality, freedom and justice are values that drive a thriving society when everyone could experience equal access to opportunities in these domains and any of their choosing.