

Thank you Mister Chair, distinguished delegates, members of civil society,

The World Youth Alliance is a global coalition of over 200,000 young people between the ages of 10-30 dedicated to the promotion and defense of human dignity in policy and culture and to building solidarity between young people in developing and developed countries.

Understanding human dignity is core to understanding what it means to be human. The act of protecting human rights only makes sense with a preliminary understanding of the concept of human dignity. What justifies the fact that all humans have rights and that these should be protected? It comes down to human dignity. Dignity is universal to all human beings. Dignity is intrinsic to us for our nature of being human. Dignity is inviolable: nothing can be done to take away the dignity of a person. Indeed people are often not treated according to their dignity, but dignity can never be lost. These concepts are powerful! People who understand dignity understand their worth and the worth of others despite any life circumstance they might acquire.

Research shows that the most powerful education is one that is rooted in a strong sense of self-identity. Can you imagine if human dignity education could be integrated into all years of a child's education? The World Youth Alliance has been making this a reality with its Human Dignity Curriculum (the HDC), developed by a passionate team of researchers, anthropologists, philosophers, artists and educators. The HDC has been implemented on every continent and in multiple languages, and its impacts have been evident.

We have seen children improve their behavior because they realize for the first time that they have value. We see them approach learning with more motivation, because they understand that failure or learning at a different speed does not make them less valuable than their peers.

In a current implementation in a school for children with learning and behavioral challenges, 12 year-olds shared that the HDC taught them to “respect people as humans and not objects,” and that “everyone deserves to be respected.” The school principal found the curriculum to be so impactful, that she will bring it to her high school students in the next academic year.

Half of the people on our planet are under 30 years old, like World Youth Alliance members. Most of us are receiving primary, secondary or tertiary education. We have all gone through a global pandemic. Aside from succeeding in helping students internalize math, science, reading and writing—what are we doing to ensure that they grow to be leaders who labor to make more just societies because they see the dignity in everyone they meet?

The Human Dignity Curriculum is a model that can be uplifted to show what human dignity education looks like in practice and how it is an essential component to realizing the right to education and the achievement of SDG4. In launching the HDC in new countries, our team is committed to working with local partners, parents, educators, religious leaders, community leaders to ensure transparency and collaboration in adapting the content to meet local needs.

We welcome further conversation and we thank you for this opportunity to share one of our best practices in education.