

## **Statement submitted by World Youth alliance**

The World Youth Alliance is a global coalition of young people dedicated to the promotion and defence of human dignity in policy and culture and building solidarity between young people in developing and developed countries.

World Youth Alliance takes as its starting point the conviction that human beings are the world's greatest resource, and that human creativity is a natural catalyst for development. Principle 1 of the Rio Declaration states that "Human beings are at the center of concerns for sustainable development. They are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature." This principle is reiterated in the ICPD Programme of Action, which describes people as the most important and valuable resource of a nation and states that countries should ensure that all people are given the opportunity to fulfill their potential.

### **On Education**

One of the important intrinsic bridges connecting human potential with sustainable development is education. Quality education is key to achieving authentic development. It empowers individuals, rather than governments, to make informed choices for and about their families. A good education is necessary to comprehend the effects of one's actions and its analysis would help further steer their course.

We believe that education is a foundational element of development. The goal of education, at its core, must be to help people recognize their and others' inherent dignity and equip them with the necessary tools to exercise their potential. When every member of a population is aware of how their education contributes to development, they will be able to fulfill their responsibility in society. Quality education must be available to all on an equal basis and should flow from an authentic understanding of the human person, and foster respect for self and others in solidarity. As international law tells us, the primary responsibility of education rests on the parents and it is the obligation of the State to support them in this role.

The most important global document on education is the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). Under this instrument, the most significant is Article 13 which stipulates that "The State parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to education. They agree that education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity, and shall strengthen the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. They further agree that education shall enable all persons to participate effectively in a free society, promote understanding, tolerance, and friendship among nations and all racial, ethnic or religious groups, and further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace."

The 2022 UNESCO Report titled "Reimagining our Futures Together: A New Social Contract for Education" developed four principles for the reform of education: interconnectedness and interdependencies; cooperation and collaboration; solidarity, compassion, ethics and empathy; and assessment. These should be aligned to achieve the aims of education and to make student growth and learning meaningful.

The World Youth Alliance has developed a curriculum that can help promote respect, responsible behaviour, and equality. The Human Dignity Curriculum (HDC) teaches children about human dignity: that every human being has it, and should therefore be respected. It also teaches children that, regardless of their circumstances, they have the potential to be excellent, to develop their gifts, and to use these gifts for the common good. The HDC is culturally sensitive and encourages parental involvement.

The HDC is categorized into two broad phases: the first comprises grades K-8 and the second grades 9-12. Themes taught to students in the first phase include human dignity, human freedom, creativity, the power to think, solidarity and friendship. The second phase explores human dignity as the foundation of human rights, advances human dignity as the necessary foundation of every political community and examines totalitarian political systems in relation to the human person, examines contemporary and historical human rights violations in international population policies and analyses sustainable development through a lens of human dignity.

After its official launch in 2017, the HDC continues to advance as one of WYA's premier educational programs with its steady integration in local governments and institutions. WYA launched the HDC website in January 2021, which features like an accessible Teacher Portal and a sleek modern design.

Young people who understand human dignity are not only prepared to make responsible personal decisions, but to contribute to their communities and to treat others with respect in their families, peer groups, and communities, including in their personal relationships. They will be prepared to contribute to sustainable development and poverty eradication, not just for themselves, but for others. The HDC helps children in realizing their inherent dignity and such insight propels them to aim and stand for equal opportunities for all and inculcates initiating action to eliminate inequalities. It acts as a prominent primary pillar to quality education by familiarizing children at a young age about the importance of their self-worth, their capacity to always choose the good, persevere in adversity, and respect their own dignity and the dignity of others. It is this basic understanding which affects learning, relationships with classmates, and future family life and work performance.

Quality education, which includes human dignity education, must be available to all on an equal basis and should flow from an authentic understanding of the human person, and foster respect for self and others in solidarity. SDG 4.7 aims to ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.

### **On Population**

The world witnessed the growth of the global population to 8 billion human being this year. As world fertility rates stabilize, harnessing the rich demographic dividend for countries becomes of paramount significance. Population management programs categorize human beings, especially vulnerable populations, as burdens instead of essential participants in sustainable development. The premise that fixed resources and equitable distribution require fewer individuals is not only flawed but inconsistent with human dignity. Rather, the World Youth Alliance encourages the Commission to adopt policies grounded in the dignity of the person.

Though individuals are the protagonists of sustained and inclusive economic growth, resilience is not merely cultivated through the foundation of human dignity education. The World Youth Alliance also believes that resilience grows in environments that value families and create the conditions for them to thrive. The family is the core unit of society. This is why it is concerning to see the fertility rates of over half of the countries in the world drop below replacement levels over the past few years.

More countries are launching pro-natalist policies because predictions of a future without children are grim. Economically, countries need a large young workforce to stimulate their economies and pay into social security programs to care for growing

elderly populations. Socially, the sex ratios in countries with a history of sex-selective birth policies have become skewed. Some increasingly male-dominated societies are seeing an increase in sex-trafficking and forced marriages, usually targeting women from neighbouring countries. Politically, shrinking societies lose their global influence, and, culturally, they lose the ability to carry on their traditions and to preserve their collective memory. In fact, data from the UN *World Population Prospects 2022* showed a drop in total fertility rates for many countries in recent decades.

The members of the World Youth Alliance call for encouraging family-friendly societies, as these form the individuals that will ensure that development is sustainable, and that economic growth is inclusive. The world needs policies that address some of the biggest problems facing families with working parents. These include targeted support for working parents and for pregnant women, as well as the expansion of childcare initiatives and maternal and paternal leave. However, these policies alone will not easily undo cultural attitudes that were cultivated amidst strict population programs and policies in the 20th century, which developed greater reservations towards having children.

### **Conclusion**

Providing inclusive and equitable quality education at all levels is critical for achieving the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda. The Human Dignity Curriculum is a model that can be uplifted to show what human dignity education looks like in practice and how it serves as an essential component to realizing the inherent right to education.