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# Doha Youth Declaration on Reshaping the Humanitarian Agenda

*This document contains the priorities and recommendations of youth who participated in the consultation process leading up to and including the WHS Global Youth Consultation (GYC) in Doha, Qatar, taking place on 1-2 September, 2015. This document is the product of months of work, preparation, outreach, consultation, analysis and evaluation which have culminated in the GYC and is based on previous UN MGCY papers on WHS, particularly the July 2015 World Humanitarian Summit Position Paper and the Thematic Position Papers developed for the same process. This document represents the opinions of youth globally on the ways we should improve humanitarian action.*

## Preamble

The year 2015 marks 70 years of the existence of the UN, the transition from the Millennium Development Goals to a transformative sustainable development agenda, and the celebration of 20 years since the adoption of the World Programme of Action for Youth. The significance of these milestones is underpinned by the increasing role of youth as agents of change within society, often playing crucial roles in the formulation, implementation, monitoring and review of policy. In short, the year 2015 is a year of paradigm shifts wherein youth are coming to claim their role as partners in progress and sustainable development, making an impact in the policy arena from the High Level Political Forum to the UNFCCC. Despite this, disaster, conflict and humanitarian crisis are becoming more entrenched.

Youth make up more than a third of people displaced by conflicts and disasters worldwide. Crises have the potential to erode protective familial and social ties and can leave young people separated from their loved ones, whilst formal and non-formal educational programs are discontinued and community and social networks broken down. The loss of livelihood, security, and protection provided by the family and community places young people at risk of poverty, violence, and abuse – not just during crisis, but long into the future, affecting their countries' development even decades later. Young girls, in particular, face heightened risk of sexual and gender-based violence, which can result in unwanted pregnancy, HIV infection, psychosocial problems, and social stigmatization. There is also the threat of human trafficking and forced or early marriage.

Despite these issues, youth have shown that they can – and must – be on the frontlines of humanitarian action. Youth are taking the lead in contributing to resilience and serving their societies when disaster strikes or conflict erupts. As the world prepares for the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS), youth have



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proven that they deserve to be recognized as partners in humanitarian matters, that they can provide innovative approaches to ameliorating the effects of humanitarian crises no matter the cause, and can help build societies that are resilient, peaceful, and inclusive. Young women and men are driving innovation, creative solutions and insights into humanitarian crises. They are the best adapted to, and have achieved, mastery in social technology, enabling them to mobilize efforts at local levels. The world is home to 1.8 billion young people<sup>1</sup>. The international community needs to ensure access to continued education and integrate the booming youth population into labour markets in order to reap the demographic dividend.

Ignoring the different needs, capacities and contributions of women, girls, boys and men can mean that some segments of the population are overlooked, sometimes with destructive consequences. Paying attention to gender issues or putting on a gender lens means recognizing the different needs, capacities and contributions of women, girls, boys and men, shaped by their different gender roles and responsibilities.

## Youth Position

### 1) Challenges on Meeting Humanitarian Needs

As youth constitute over half the population, and with the diverse backgrounds, the perspectives, and the skillsets they bring to the table, youth can act as an integral part of any humanitarian action. As it stands, opportunities for youth to become involved in the increasingly complex humanitarian landscape are limited, preventing society from fully benefiting from the contributions they have to bring.

#### 1.1 Funding

- Establish a funding mechanism that allows local actors to directly access humanitarian resources.
- Create a macroeconomic environment that discourages activities that contribute to underlying risk factors, such as UNEP's Environmental Risk Integration in Sovereign Credits, or E-RISC, Ecological Tax Reform, and a Carbon Tax, and should be central to innovative finance to address humanitarian needs.

#### 1.2 Accountability

- Establish and implement an obligatory disclosure mechanism, such as shadow reporting, that ensures funds and responses are efficient and accounted for.
- Obligatory inclusion of International Humanitarian Law and human rights law in training humanitarian actors and military, and developing guidelines for actions in the field. Enhance

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations Population Funds. "The power of 1.8 billion: adolescents, youth and the transformation of the future". Available from: [http://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/EN-SWOP14-Report\\_FINAL-web.pdf](http://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/EN-SWOP14-Report_FINAL-web.pdf)



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accountability to include an impact assessment via quantitative and qualitative methods on the follow up and monitoring of humanitarian action.

### 1.3 Right to Information

- Adopt initiatives for information sharing in humanitarian settings like the Humanitarian Data Exchange (HDX) that allow actors to intervene in a contextualized manner.

### 1.4 Aid Structure

- Fully implement and respect the Humanitarian Principles, along with International Humanitarian Law and relevant provisions and practices for disaster settings, in order to ensure that aid efforts are sustained and complete.
- Develop methods that promote local capacity development, such as socially and environmentally responsible income generation projects by incorporating local actors in the structuring of humanitarian programs.

## 2) Humanitarian Effectiveness

Worldwide, young people are active in humanitarian volunteering and active as frontline responders during crises, sharing their skills, time and resources; they facilitate peer-to-peer education in preparedness and peacebuilding; they help rebuild communities; they coordinate and connect individuals and organizations at all levels; they contribute to policy and advocacy initiatives and even promote dialogue and solidarity among divided communities in times of conflict.

### 2.1 Youth Participation and Localization of Response:

Youth, as part of affected populations, are best placed to know the needs of their local communities and thus are often first responders in humanitarian crises. It is imperative that all response strategy, needs assessment, planning and delivery specifically and deliberately include young people as official actors.

- Design and support youth-led and youth-friendly initiatives to empower young people economically, generating income and long-term sustainable economic development to strengthen communities' resilience against both immediate and protracted crisis situations.
- Establish international standards around the principle of subsidiarity, through which grassroots action and community-based participation are essential aspects of humanitarian action. This bottom-up approach should take into account local contexts, supported by humanitarian principles and best practices mutually agreed-upon by international, national, and local-level stakeholders.
- Integrate age-sensitivity into the cluster approach focusing on young people in all phases of emergencies. The gender marker should evolve into a gender and age marker which enshrines intergenerational and gender solidarity as to best address the needs of young people and all population age groups.



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- Prioritize dedicated, predictable and multi-year funding models addressing young people's priorities and capacities in the global humanitarian system. Donors must support youth-led organizations which are currently underfunded and disorganized.

## 2.2 Effective Collaboration and Communication between Stakeholders

Improving coordination mechanisms as poor communication and coordination between actors may lead to a lack of timely and effective delivery, duplication of efforts and misallocation of resources.

- Initiate needs assessments, as well as participatory planning and budgeting, through a multi-stakeholder approach that has designated spaces for youth.
- Invest in relevant capacities, skills, and spaces to enable and facilitate young people to effectively communicate about prevention, preparedness, response and recovery within their communities.
- Develop specific data collection tools and train young volunteers in affected communities to collect, monitor, and report data that will inform country-level preparedness and response standards. Disaggregate data in conflict or crisis stricken areas by sex, age, and socio-economic, as well as other status so that the situations of youth can be assessed.
- Ensure effective cooperation and coordination between actors at all levels through specific channels to support effective preparedness and response. Enable collaboration among actors to share responsibilities on complex projects and thus reduce individual costs.
- Provide youth with the opportunity to engage in humanitarian actions at the global level through approaching the whole community directly rather than through contacting certain local organization or governmental bodies.

## 2.3 Contextualization of Response: Health care and the health of vulnerable populations

- Protect the rights of vulnerable populations, including the fundamental right to health and International Right to Water and Sanitation, compliment and complete the current protection of human rights and International Humanitarian Law, thus addressing their increased risks of health, social and financial issues.
- Ensure access and no obstructions to health care, including psychosocial and sexual and reproductive health care, during and after humanitarian crises.
- Support building of comprehensive and responsive health systems, and strengthening existing ones, that support the right to health and sexual health in case of humanitarian crises.
- Formulate action plans addressing health according to geographic, demographic and cultural contexts in addition to situation-specific scenarios and needs.

## 2.4 Longer-Term Planning

- Integrate conceptual frameworks like *Build Back Better* into the humanitarian response to ensure better services to the affected community.



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- Nurture and strengthen the capacity of youth through training programs, and an enabling and sustainable economic environment. Gender equality and empowerment of young women should be mainstreamed into all trainings and planning to ensure inclusive policies in humanitarian action. Refugees and affected populations from conflicts could be trained as facilitators and project managers who should then transfer their skills to other youth.
- Create and review preparedness and response standards at all levels in coordination with all social groups.
- Execute planning that is adaptable and flexible as to respond to constantly changing contexts.
- Create local databases of ongoing local humanitarian engagement to highlight opportunities for social groups, especially youth, allow case study, and avoid duplication of efforts. Give actors access to information and resources which will ensure Monitoring and Evaluation.

## 2.5 Participatory Accountability

- Include youth in accountability and feedback mechanisms for humanitarian action through grassroots reporting and monitoring. Ensure specific and easily measurable indicators of humanitarian work being done and cross-checked in reports. Projects of NGOs and INGOs should first be assessed and validated by local communities, including youth, based on its social, economic, and environmental impacts, and continuous follow-up should be available.
- Ensure freedom of speech so that youth can have a voice at all levels of community life.

## 3) Serving the Needs of People in Conflict

As youth, we underline the direct link between peace, security and development; without a stable and peaceful environment development cannot be sustainable. Nearly half of the global population is under the age of 30, with youth constituting a large portion of the global population affected by violence. Young people play active roles in building sustainable peace and preventing violence.

Young people are vital stakeholders in peacebuilding: they have the potential to act as community leaders in preventing violence, fostering reconciliation, and post-conflict reconstruction. With special reference to the work done by youth in the adoption of the *Amman Youth Declaration* as well as Goal 16 of the *Sustainable Development Goals* and the *Guiding Principles on Young People's Participation in Peacebuilding*.

### 3.1 Global framework addressing the needs of young people in conflict

A new global framework is needed to address the needs of young people in conflict. This framework must respect, compliment and complete the protection of international humanitarian law and address the specific needs, assets, potential and diverse identities of youth in conflicts, post-conflict and widespread violence scenarios.



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- Recognise the demographic imperative to include youth in work to achieve peace; humanitarian and security actors should systematically consult with civil society youth organizations to understand conflict dynamics, structural causes of violence, and priorities for peace.
- Actively engage young people in the design and development of policies and responses, at all levels and in all regions, seeking to extend participation beyond the reach of dialogue.
- Pressure the UN Security Council to adopt a resolution on Youth, Peace and Security to ensure recognition and support for young people's role in building peace and countering violence.
- Prevent gender-based violence, early- and forced- marriage, sexual and domestic violence, femicide and female genital mutilation.
- Ensure safe access in conflicts to affordable and quality health services, including those for sexual and reproductive health, particularly for vulnerable people, including young women and adolescents, in humanitarian settings.
- Dedicate funding and training for service providers (e.g. task shifting) to deliver services for sexual and reproductive health in a respectful and culturally-sensitive manner.
- Take actions to decrease sexual and gender-based violence in conflict and its harmful effects, including prevention, psychosocial support and legal prosecution of perpetrators.
- Encourage the cooperation of international actors to facilitate collaboration between young people, youth organisations and networks in the contexts of conflict, post conflict and widespread violence.
- Provide quality support with a focus on building resilience; education, health services, vocational training, and youth employment.
- Recognize youth's capabilities to engage in meaningful response efforts, such as peer-to-peer psychosocial support initiatives.

### **3.2 Sustainable Community Preparedness and Resilience in Conflict**

The resilience of communities at risk of, and affected by, violence, conflict and displacement must be ensured through social, economic and psychological preparedness.

- Create opportunities for the economic, social, and political empowerment of refugees, IDPs and affected peoples in conflict and non-conflict situations through prioritisation of social enterprise, loan systems and targeted investments.
- Develop innovative technologies such as e-learning platforms and mobile schools to enable affected populations to continue their education in displaced settings.
- Ensure preparedness to the direct and indirect negative consequences of human-induced hazards such as rapid changes in the migration patterns of displaced peoples.
- Create strategies to minimise adverse health consequences in displacement settings, such as disease management and improved access to clean water and sanitation.
- Equip youth with relevant skills (in social support and reconciliation) to be effective peacebuilders and agents of reconciliation.



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- Identify and recognise the specific risks faced by vulnerable groups by response processes.
- Integrate and recognize young IDPs and refugees, irrespective of their legal status, into the formal health and education systems of host and conflict-affected countries.

## 4) Transformation Through Innovation

Youth bring unique perspectives and insights as they are more adaptable to fast evolving systems. Youth are adept at using technology and never before have they been more interconnected. They are equipped with the skill set to generate innovative ideas and translate them into humanitarian action.

Young people are not afraid to test new ideas, meet the challenges that emerge and rework their projects, and scale up identified solutions. They can further help integrate parallel processes, and design fit-for-purpose tools that satisfy specific local contexts.

Innovation has the potential to expand the scope within which humanitarian aid will be reshaped through the World Humanitarian Summit process, especially when there is meaningful engagement of children and youth.

### 4.1 Innovative Tools for Local Capacity and Participation

Improving local capacity and participation plays an integral role in improving efficiency and effectiveness in humanitarian responses.

- Pursue innovative techniques for using existing resources which prioritize cost-effectiveness, robustness, and scalability (e.g. technology recycling and e-readers).
- Improve networks for information dissemination and provide a voice for affected people, especially vulnerable groups in the humanitarian landscape (e.g. crowdsourcing).
- Leverage social media to enable responder cooperation, more effectively mobilize efforts, and coordinate local actors.
- Provide youth with open access to humanitarian data and tools to properly engage in disaster preparedness and response (e.g. quality assurance for humanitarian action).
- Encourage synergistic partnerships that bridge humanitarian aid and sustainable development.
- Foster communication via robust and portable technologies at the local level to facilitate collaboration and engagement of different humanitarian actors (e.g. telemedicine, e-learning, phone applications).
- Establish an open platform for youth to share information, collaborate, identify needs, make commitments and implement solutions along with other actors.
- Engage in research-driven policies with local actors through innovation hubs/labs in order to build resilience, gather data, and determine the most appropriate mechanism for prevention or



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response proactively before a crisis occurs (e.g. use of Call Data Records (CDRs) for predicting migration).

#### **4.2 Incubating Innovation - Gateways and Obstacles**

Adequate resources and space for innovative thinking are essential prerequisites for redefining approaches to humanitarian aid; the adverse may hinder scaling of new ideas and practices.

- Enable safe learning spaces to raise awareness on preventative safeguards and measures to disaster response, strengthen resilience, and promote participatory action (e.g. virtual disaster simulation, meetups).
- Humanitarian aid should promote widespread systems change, rather than one-off solutions that cannot be shared, diffused, or scaled. Humanitarian responders should encourage the open sourcing of digital tools and sharing of response data.
- Encourage alternative and supplemental funding systems to close funding gaps (e.g. crowdfunding, mobile money, cash transfers/vouchers and grant restructuring).
- Use innovative tools to transcend censorship barriers to humanitarian aid.
- Develop innovation hubs at local, national, and regional levels to enable better communication, improved coordination, and mobilizing action.
- Democratize intellectual property rights and mechanize technology transfer.
- Encourage online and offline peer-to-peer exchange to share knowledge, skills, culture and trade to collectively build resilience through interactive media and art.
- Develop innovative financing mechanisms that limit aid dependency, while promoting long-term sustainable resilience and mitigates risks from future crisis.
- Make use of technologies such as mapping, web-based platforms, social networking, and others to build partnerships, engage youth in early-warning, promote reciprocal action, and coordinate efforts of different humanitarian actors.

#### **4.3 Ethics of Innovation**

Analyze the local socio-cultural, political, environmental, and economic realities- within which new technologies are introduced before establishing new policies.

- Avoid marginalizing groups and minimize expansion of the digital divide (e.g. youth as technologically connected although elderly may not be).
- Design human-centered tools that work within the technical and financial capacities while contextualizing tools and ensuring local ownership (e.g. radio, SMS, and/or internet-based platforms based upon a nation's infrastructure).
- Provide policies and guidelines that are accountable in humanitarian actions within the international humanitarian system (e.g. data disaggregation before and after humanitarian response, youth as field data collectors, and mobile data collection).





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- Establish a regulatory body to set standards, track progress, share, and coordinate results with other organizations to ensure technologies are fit-for-purpose, allowing a space for redressing grievances.
- Support Trade-related Intellectual Property Rights flexibilities (TRIPS) and expand scope to take into account humanitarian situations.
- Engage in dialogue between those providing and receiving aid to promote mutual understanding, promote best practices, and identify synergies and tradeoffs in humanitarian response.
- Assess proper technology mechanisms at the regional and global level to measure the social, economic, and environmental impact of humanitarian interventions, as well as proper monitoring, follow-up, and review modalities.

## 5) Reducing Vulnerability and Managing Risks

Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) is the concept and practice of reducing disaster risks through systematic efforts to analyse and reduce the causal factors of disasters.<sup>2</sup> It is a concept which is applicable throughout the Disaster Risk Management circle. Disasters are unforeseen and no country is immune to disasters. DRR is thereby an investment no country can afford to neglect. Society's preparedness for a hazard is essential to mitigating the severity of social, economic and environmental impacts of disasters<sup>3</sup>. The risks for disasters arising from climate change, increasing instability and the continual growth and migration of populations continue to challenge societal resilience<sup>4</sup>. We believe that comprehensive DRR is the only way to prevent the erosion of decades of social development.

Priorities:

- Develop, monitor, and review international and national DRR strategies with robust governance and accountability mechanisms, including through the operationalization of the Sendai Framework for Action on DRR.
- Establish early warning mechanisms that meet the needs of all people, especially vulnerable people in disaster prone areas.
- Allocate 30% of international and national humanitarian aid for Building Back Better in humanitarian recovery with obligatory inclusion of local and national response in the strategy.
- Include human-induced disasters, including conflicts, in disaster prevention and preparedness strategies and implementation, as a cause, consequence and risk factor<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), 2009

<sup>3</sup> World Health Organization [Internet]. Risk Reduction and Emergency Preparedness: WHO six-year strategy for the health sector and community capacity development. 2007 [cited 2014 Aug 30]. Available from: <http://www.who.int/hac/publications/en/>

<sup>4</sup> The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction [Internet]. Briefing Note 01: Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction. 2008 [cited in 2014 Aug 30]. Available from: <http://www.unisdr.org/we/inform/publications/4146>

<sup>5</sup> Overseas Development Institute (ODI). The future framework for disaster risk reduction A guide for decision-makers. Available from: <http://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/8996.pdf>



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- Formulate and implement holistic international and national agendas for disaster risk management (prevention, preparedness, response and recovery), with coherent strategies and implementation mechanisms that utilize the cluster system and with periodic monitoring.
- Contextualise resource allocation for enhanced DRR, scientific research, and database systems contributing to monitoring of and best practice related to DRR, as well as disaster and population mapping.
- Enhance health care systems' preparedness and prevention of biological disasters through improved training of health personnel and the development and implementation of comprehensive hospital DRR strategies, including implementation of Safe Hospital Initiative, vaccination campaigns, comprehensive sexual and reproductive health strategies and psychosocial support.
- Localise humanitarian response through compulsory disaster simulation trainings in schools and workplaces.
- Establish a youth-led, institutionalised and global-to-local youth engagement platform that provides young people the space for meaningful contribution to DRR policy formulation, implementation, monitoring and review; lead youth friendly actions on education and awareness.
- Allocate space for academia, civil society and youth in DRR committees from local to international levels.
- Reduce violence, including extremism, sexual violence and child abuse, through education and innovative tools of awareness.
- Enhance DRR education and training that are gender and age sensitive need to be prioritized and include gender equity as a preventative tool to reduce risks of gender-based violence and high-risk sexual behavior.
- Put vulnerable groups and people centered approach on the center of DRR actions, including preventative actions reducing the vulnerability of youth, children and women.
- Diversify agricultural production in order to prevent environmental and nutritional risks (i.e drought and famine) related to monocultural agricultures.
- Bolster environmental resilience through climate change adaptation trainings.
- Establish a public trust fund in which private entities can invest money in exchange for tax incentives, reduction or relief.