

# UNESCO YOUTH FORUM 2015

Young Global Citizens for a Sustainable Planet

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United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



UNESCO Youth Forum  
9th Edition  
26-28 October 2015

THE AMERICAN  
UNIVERSITY 50  
of PARIS YEARS



carinena Shavez/AUP

# TAKE ACTION: BE THE CHANGE



Carenina Snachez/AUP

## Uniting All

The underlying themes of the many Future Literacy Knowledge Labs are unity and equality. The participants' ideal goal is to create a world with no labels. "Everyone is connected," Charlotte Landsheere said of her group's work, "The world is flexible, we should be flexible."

During the first day of the UNESCO Youth Forum, the working groups of the Knowledge Labs came together to create sculptures that echo their visions of the future. "Our vision is about interconnectedness, where we are all bound together and all the same," Landsheere said, "this rope connects us and when we look at each other, we see all the similarities."

On the second day, the groups prepared individual and global action plans. One of the main goals of the forum is to provide the COP21 conference with a list of sustainable recommendations for a post-2015 world from the younger generation. "It is time for citizens to take power," Maylis Castaigmet explained, "Our future is an inclusive world. Everyone's opinion matters."

These Knowledge Labs are empowering participants to create global action plans, aimed towards creating lasting change on a regional level. "Local is good for humanity," Mora Matassi said while discussing with her peers, "Local is good for progress."

Initiatives brainstormed by participants were separated into groups based on various topics ranging from climate change to the future state of human rights. Participants were meant to think deeper about global issues and work out long-term solutions. The youth leaders of the individual Knowledge Labs wanted them to think further than their predecessors. "Think beyond what we already want," supervisors instructed, "and what has already been said. Be radical, be bold, be innovation." • Cody Campbell



## Climate Change

Around 90 young delegates gathered today in the Local Practices, Biodiversity, and Disasters Knowledge Lab to draft global action plans for fighting climate change.

The delegates brainstormed the majority of the morning in breakout groups, creating local, national and international solutions. They first drafted personal commitments to push their local communities to adopt better environmental practices. Suggestions ranged from promoting efficient waste-collection programs to solutions as simple as planting trees.



Carenina Snachez/AUP

The breakout groups, aided by youth peer facilitators, then drafted three global actions that could improve local practices, biodiversity, and resilience in times of natural disaster. These were discussed with the entire Knowledge Lab, choosing five strong solutions to present to all UNESCO Youth Forum participants at the plenary session later Tuesday evening.

Each group's brainstorm session produced different ideas for global action. One group focused on taxing countries based on the size of their carbon footprints. Another group emphasized the need for an open database with historical facts on water usage, energy consumption, and carbon emissions, with information accessible to all.

"The purpose of today is really to see how we can move past the assumptions that humans are materialistic, and short-termistic, and how to rewrite the story of our generation," said Nalini Singh, a peer facilitator from New Zealand. "A large part of that involves taking action in the real world, beyond just writing things into a proposal that will be sent into the UNESCO General Conference."

• Ariana Mozafari



Carenina Snachez/AUP

environmental education in Zambia, leading "many to be ignorant about how to take care of their world and their future". She proposed youth community action groups to educate and spread awareness about climate change and sustainability. Similarly, Biru Anjanie from Indonesia described the lack of opportunities and economic mobility for working class individuals in Indonesia. The group collaborated in order to propose solutions to these localized issues.

After the discussions, a representative from each group presented their plans. Many groups brought up the importance of utilizing social media to connect youth from around the world. Timescape, for example, is an online tool used by UNESCO which works to document and promote the actions of fellow youth. Other groups detailed the use of education to promote peace and combat violent extremism.

Participants enjoyed these labs and their ability to freely converse with other young people from around the world. For Austrian participant Thomas Schallhart, the forum is an amazing opportunity to "meet globally minded people" with similar interests. The collaborative efforts of individuals from around the world was evident in the final proposals to be presented to the UNESCO General Conference. • Ariana Arzani

## Energy of Youth

According to British participant Dalí ten Hove, the Capturing Energy of Youth lab focused on "tapping into the massive and powerful labor force of the global youth". Participants were divided into small groups, focusing on micro-issues and potential solutions that young people can carry out. The topics tackled ranged from broad issues about human rights to topics specific to certain countries.

Mukuka Chihimba of Zambia detailed the lack of environmental education in Zambia, leading "many to be ignorant about how to take care of their world and their future". She proposed youth community action groups to educate and spread awareness about climate change and sustainability. Similarly, Biru Anjanie from Indonesia described the lack of opportunities and economic mobility for working class individuals in Indonesia. The group collaborated in order to propose solutions to these localized issues.

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# YADAV: EDUCATING THROUGH PERSONAL STORYTELLING

Gautam Yadav is a role model for the LGBT youth in India, fighting to establish an identity for LGBT communities. Gautam's contributions have ranged from being a human rights activist and protecting the rights of LGBT and PLHIV communities worldwide, to being a voice on several international forums such as this week's UNESCO Youth Forum. He shares his story and educates young people on issues of discrimination, sexual identity and sexual health.

When he was in fourth grade, Gautam realized that he was attracted to men and wanted to be open about his sexuality. Throughout his young years he was constantly bullied and stigmatized at school, ultimately causing him to stop his education.

In September 2009, Gautam found out that he was HIV-positive. His family stood by him as a strong support system in all of his struggles. He described the difficulty of living in India with HIV, "India is not a place where you can talk about your sexuality, it is a taboo".

Gautam is taking on the challenge of generating a different view towards the LGBT community, attempting to diminish stigma and discrimination. He said one day, as he was giving away condoms to young people and educating them on safe sex, the police came saying that he was encouraging debauchery and depravity, threatening him with jail. Still, Gautam remains optimistic about the future of his country, "I am hoping for a better future for India. A safe place, that does not differentiate between people according to their sexuality, age, or social cast. I want freedom of expression."

Gautam is one of 14 HIV+ people in Mumbai, India, who documented their lives in order to combat stigma and prejudice. The stories that were told through these photographs and videos had a huge impact and went viral on the Internet. He explained how photography and videos can serve as educational storytelling tools and contribute towards changing discrimination about both sexual orientation and HIV.

He is now working towards completing his education, and hopes to get a Bachelor's degree in social work. In the future, he would like to work towards establishing changes in the Indian education system so youth are taught at a younger age about about HIV, AIDS, gender, sexuality and sex. • Lucille Befort



Melissa Halabe/ AUP



# DEMBELE: DEFENDING AGAINST MALARIA WITH FASO SOAP

"It's not that we don't dare because things are difficult, things are difficult because we don't dare," announced Moctar Dembele, delivering a statement confirmed by the success of Faso soap. During the company's early stages, Dembele faced a multitude of difficulties. His course load as an engineering student was demanding and left him with little time to devote to Faso. Dembele decided to pursue his project despite the obstacles. He explains how his university allotted him "six months for courses and six months for internship." He devoted his internship hours to building his new business. It was a narrow window of time for an undertaking as ambitious as Faso soap, but Dembele persevered. At the end of six months, he and his partner entered Faso into the Global Science Venture competition. They won.

Suddenly, Faso soap had positioned itself on the global stage. "People were amazed," Dembele recalls proudly. Because Dembele dared to confront a difficult situation, entire communities have defended themselves from malaria, one of the world's most deadly diseases. Dembele has been

able to make major change because Faso's low prices make it accessible for even those in extreme poverty. Therefore, more people are able to protect themselves and the impact is greater. But driving down prices has been another difficulty. Not surprisingly, Dembele was not deterred.

Following his mantra of being bold in the face of difficulty, Dembele found an innovative way to lower the price of his soap. He used locally sourced ingredients from Burkina Faso and hired local workers. Concentrating Faso's production in his home country has kept the price of his soap affordable. Furthermore, it has generated jobs in the impoverished Burkina Faso community. Ultimately, Dembele's willingness to face adversity has made life easier for so many around him. There were many factors which made it difficult for Dembele to launch Faso soap, but instead of being intimidated, Dembele dared. The result is a groundbreaking product that has revolutionized the prevention of malaria. No matter what difficulties lie in Faso's future, Dembele will continue to persevere. • **Emilie Chung**



Melissa Halabe/AUP



Melissa Halabe/AUP

# HEARD AT THE FORUM

**"If you really put yourself into the exercise: out of context, people will say you're crazy, but here I can feel free to be creative and to let the ideas come out and explore it."**

Clara Houzelot / 21 / France



Melissa Halabe/AUP

**"I came here to learn how youth around the world are doing the same thing I'm doing."**

Aniqa Nawar/ 22 / Bangladesh

**"The forum is a good place to meet other like minded individuals, to share ideas, to exchange knowledge, to partner, to create linkages, to expand the networks, to be challenged, to learn new things, to get new information, and you know, borrow best practices from others who are doing other things better and incorporate that back to the networks that we are in. For me, it's just a platform to meet and to learn and to share."**

Lawrence Muli / 25 / Ethiopia

**"I just decided I want to start a group in Sweden about environment preservation. I know people are interested and there's no platform and there's no one but it's possible. It could be."**

Linnea Anderson / 20 / Sweden

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**UNESCO YOUTH FORUM**  
9TH EDITION- 2015 DAY TWO