



YOUTH MANIFESTO TO END INEQUALITY

INTRODUCTION

We, youth from 20 countries participating in the Youth Summit on Inequality held in Montreal, Canada on the 10th and 11th of August 2016 in the framework of the World Social Forum, express our indignation about the extreme inequalities affecting our societies. These inequalities are the product of an unsustainable and exclusionary model of development that harms the planet, concentrates wealth and resources in the hands of a few, and exacerbates poverty and violence while exploiting and excluding the majority. Therefore, we present this manifesto to the world, to put forward our views and demands concerning the important challenges we face today, determined to build a fair, just and sustainable society.

Youth participation

While 40% of the world population is under 25, youth are systematically excluded from decision-making processes. For example, globally only 1.65% of parliamentarians are in their 20s. From the community to the global level, the vast majority of youth do not have a say in shaping their society. Despite the fact that youth movements around the world have demonstrated the ability, energy and creativity of young people in generating solutions to major problems of our time, we are not considered as serious partners in decisions that affect our own lives as well as society as a whole. We lack opportunities to play a meaningful role in the development of our communities and beyond.

Governments and other actors must implement the laws and mechanisms - including youth quotas - needed to guarantee youth participation in decisions that affect our society whilst maintaining respect for the autonomy of our organizations. Society must promote and strengthen transformative youth leadership and eliminate stigmatization that excludes us. We young people must have the freedom and possibility to assemble and strengthen our capacities in order to create a local to global movement that is plural and inclusive and has the capacity to raise awareness, generate new forms of mobilization, construct solid propositions and address power imbalances.

Identity

Youth face multiple forms of discrimination based on ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, social class, disability or just the fact of our age. These forms of discrimination reproduce and reinforce each other and accentuate social, economic and political exclusion that affect youth worldwide. They are a source of violence, poverty and conflict affecting to a great extent girls and young women. The systemic discriminations and violence experienced by some minority groups, such as indigenous peoples and refugees, are particularly alarming.



We believe in and fight for a world where diversity is our strength and where we are all free and have the same rights regardless of our differences. All actors in society should recognize diversity and promote inclusive policies that guarantee the rights of everyone and promote interconnectedness. Intercultural dialogues and solidarity should be promoted through innovative approaches starting at the local level. Youth must be able to advocate for plurality and combat discrimination in all areas without being subject to repressive action for doing so.

Empowerment of young women

1 in 3 women are victims of physical or sexual violence. 34 million young women have never gone to school. Political participation of women remains very weak, and there are always people who think that women do not have the same capacities as men. In such a patriarchal system, it is impossible to have a world in which women and men are respected, valued and treated equally.

We young people call for the creation of leadership programs in and out of schools that are comprehensive and strengthen the mutual trust between young women and young men and enable us to pursue our own interests. We call for capacity development programs that are appealing for young women, the creation of spaces for them in all decision-making bodies, and concrete strategies to promote their economic empowerment. We need to develop campaigns for the promotion, implementation and respect of international conventions and national laws that guarantee the participation, the rights and dignity of women, including the right to live a life free of violence.

Education

We young people reiterate that access to quality education is an undeniable basic human right as stated in the 4th UN Sustainable Development Goal and one of the most powerful means to break the cycle of poverty. Quality education reduces early school drop-out, early marriage and un- and underemployment. However, there is great disparity in access to quality education for all youth globally. 103 million youth worldwide, of which 60% are young women, still lack basic literacy skills.

We envision a world in which free and quality education is adapted to local contexts and provided in a safe environment accessible for everyone, including girls and young women. Governments must develop effective indicators to evaluate the quality of education provided at all levels. We young people must raise awareness to have important issues such as democracy, global citizenship and interculturalism included in education programs. We demand governments provide teachers decent salaries and continuous training and invest a set percentage of GDP in educational infrastructure development, open internet access and adaptable learning resources. Public funds should be used to promote education and peace, not war.

Employment

Globally, the youth unemployment rate is almost 3 times higher than the adult rate. The informal sector in many countries contributes to over 70% of available jobs and youth are predominantly employed in low productive work with poor conditions. Youth face many barriers when competing in the increasingly demanding job market, such as the lack of professional experience, skills mismatch and underestimation of our competences and talents.



We young people call for a global charter and a global fund for youth employment and entrepreneurship that include social protection schemes for unemployed youth. We also call for a global network that brings together civil society, the private sector and governments to promote quality education and decent employment for young people. We demand that legal frameworks and national budgets promote youth entrepreneurship and enhance the recruitment of youth in the private and public sectors through different means such as paid internships. We call for the right to decent work and the guarantee of young people's labor rights, including the protection against exploitation and precarious conditions, particularly for young women.

Equitable access to resources

Young people lack access to natural and financial resources, including credit and land, limiting their social mobility. Within a global neoliberal system, financial and natural resources are increasingly concentrated in the hands of a few and are managed in ways that damage ecological systems and worsen climate change.

We call for national governments and multilateral agencies to ensure responsible management of natural resources in a manner that serves the public interest and respects social and environmental rights. We should be involved in the continuous monitoring and evaluation of resource management to ensure transparency and sustainability and promoting our rights. We also call for implementing youth policies that guarantee young people's access to inclusive financial services enabling our social mobility.

CONCLUSION

Today, we are faced with the increasing challenge of inequality that threatens current and future generations. There must be a collaborative effort to address this structurally and implement sustainable solutions to the social, political and economic problems plaguing our societies. We call on youth worldwide to mobilize around the issues of youth participation, diversity, empowerment of young women, education, employment, and equitable access to resources. We call on governments, the private sector and civil society to adopt our recommendations and work with us, as youth are not the leaders of tomorrow but of today. Together, we can create transformative change to end inequality!