Belfast

One Young World

YOUNG WORLD

2023

Plenary Challenges

Contents

Introduction

It gives us immense pleasure to introduce the five plenary challenges for the 2023 One Young World Summit in Belfast.

The reason why One Young World continues to be such a powerful force for change is because we are driven and inspired by our global community of young people. This is why our Global Consultation Process (GCP) is such an important tool in the development of our plenary challenges, and we are hugely grateful to the thousand young people who took part in this year's survey.

The results of this year's GCP were conclusive in understanding the hopes and fears of our next generation of leaders. Almost unanimous among responders was concern over the climate emergency and the need for businesses to do more to prioritise the planet over profit. Mental health was another key theme, with many citing the climate emergency, the global cost of living crisis, and unhealthy relationships as causes of poor mental health among young people.

Unsurprisingly, we also saw the global repercussions of the war in Ukraine filter into the GCP responses with a concern over international food shortages featuring prominently. Similarly, concerns about inequality, racism, fascism and the fear of religiously motivated acts of violence were highly noticeable in this year's consultation responses.

Finally, we are incredibly proud that One Young World will be part of the official celebrations for the 25th anniversary of the signing of the Good Friday Belfast Agreement. Therefore, it was essential for us that peace and reconciliation play a central role at the Summit, both as a plenary challenge but also as a core theme in our opening and closing ceremonies.

We hope you enjoy reading more about our plenary challenges for the 2023 Summit and we look forward to seeing you in Belfast!

David Jones
Co-Founder

Kate Robertson
Co-Founder

Global Consultation Process Key Findings

49% Were highly concerned about the rise of racism, hate-speech, fascism, and the threat of religiously motivated violence in their region

92% Believed that decarbonisation should either be equal to or more or important than shareholder return for businesses

30% Linked their poor mental health to the climate emergency

67% Consider the provision of mental health care in their country to be either poor or insufficient

15% Believe their countries' education system is fully preparing young people to meet the global challenges we face in the coming decades

75% State they have been directly or indirectly impacted by the decline in global peace and security

81% Believe that equal access to quality education is a fundamental human right

93% Either believe that capitalism needs reform or we need a new economic system entirely

24% Considered their country's education system is doing enough to raise awareness around LGBTQ+ issues and rights

Respondents identified the top 5 most urgent UN Sustainable Development Goals to be: **Goal 13**: Climate action, **Goal 4**: Quality Education, **Goal 2**: Zero Hunger, **Goal 1**: No Poverty, and **Goal 3**: Good health and well-being

The 5 Plenary Challenges

1 ## Peace and Reconciliation
How can communities build and sustain lasting peace?

2 ## Climate Emergency
How can we ensure responsible stewardship of our planet's resources?

3 ## Food Crisis
How can we end this global food crisis before it becomes a hunger catastrophe?

4 ## Education
How can we fight inequality through education?

5 ## Mental Health
How can we make mental health a priority?

Peace and Reconciliation

How can communities build and sustain lasting peace?

The Good Friday Agreement is universally regarded as one of the greatest acts of diplomacy of the 20th Century and has become a global blueprint for how war-torn communities can achieve peace and reconciliation. Key to the ongoing success of the Good Friday Agreement was the work undertaken by communities in Northern Ireland to cross cultural, religious, and economic divides, reconciling the damage caused by the Troubles. This is work that continues to this day with the understanding that peace is more than a treaty, it is something that has to be won every single day of the year.

Around the world, an estimated third of all people live in conflict zones. However, after the guns fall silent and peace agreements are signed, it is communities who continue to deal with the harmful consequences of a fractured society. Healing fractured communities was an important theme for a large number of the young people who responded to our consultation, with almost 32% saying they were pessimistic about the prospects of peace in their region and a quarter being extremely concerned about the rise of racially and religiously motivated violence.

What can we learn from the faith and civic communities in Northern Ireland about how peace is first won and then sustained? How can this continued commitment to reconciliation act as a roadmap for other parts of the world divided by conflict?

> *"Your efforts to create a better world for your children have been a source of inspiration and hope to people in many other countries. If the world is to learn lessons about how to manage a transition from troubles and violence to peace, surely it can learn some of them from you -- from your commitment, courage and imagination in seeking solutions and fostering trust between communities which had been at loggerheads for decades."*
>
> **Kofi Annan (1938 – 2018)**
> **Former UN Secretary General & One Young World Counsellor**
> **From a lecture given to the University of Ulster in 2004**

Climate Emergency

How can we ensure responsible stewardship of our planet's resources?

For almost all the young people who responded to our consultation, tackling the Climate Emergency was the biggest priority, with 94.2% agreeing that decarbonisation should either be equal to or more important than shareholder return for businesses.

Of increasing concern to young people was the trend of businesses greenwashing their output rather than seeking to decarbonise all levels of their industry. A key example being the expansion of electric car ownership recently. Whilst the move to electric is lauded by many industries as part of their commitment to the climate, less thought is given to the environmental damage caused by the rare-earth mining and other natural resources needed to make electric car batteries.

Our planet has a finite amount of resources which are depleting at an alarming rate. Across the world we see scandalous examples of, over mining, over farming, and deforestation all done in the name of feeding ever increasing consumer demands. For example, by the time of the summit the world will be on track to have lost six million hectares of forest in 2023, feeding global demand for timber and farmland.

Not only is this having a disastrous impact on the environment, but also on a human level it is fuelling the exploitation of workers, displacing indigenous peoples, and putting at risk the lives of those living in climate vulnerable countries.

Every business decision has a carbon impact and with supply chains becoming ever more complex, how can we ensure that corporations don't succumb to 'greenwashing' but take lasting steps to reduce the carbon footprints of both their direct and indirect actions? Moreover, what can we learn from indigenous peoples about responsible stewardship of land and natural resources?

Food Crisis

How can we end this global food crisis before it becomes a hunger catastrophe?

According to the World Food Programme, the planet is facing a food crisis of unprecedented proportions, the largest in modern history. 2.3 billion people worldwide (29.3%) are food insecure, with 828 million experiencing chronic hunger.

What's more, 49 million people in 49 countries are on the verge of famine as a direct result of the current food crisis. If this were to materialise, this would represent a hunger catastrophe the scale of which the world has not seen in the modern era. .

The food crisis facing the most vulnerable populations has advanced towards catastrophe due to various factors, including climate shocks, biodiversity loss, conflict in the 'world's bread basket' in eastern Ukraine, and stagnating economic development. Globally, the FAO estimates that severe food insecurity has increased by at least 43.37% since 2014, noting a clear decline in the resilience of the global food system.

When asked to prioritise the UN SDGs, respondents to the One Young World Global Consultation survey listed 'End Hunger and Achieve Food Security' as the second-highest priority but also indicated that it is an area that, overall, they feel only moderately well informed on. Given the complexity and increasing fragility of our global food systems, it is essential that the food crisis is addressed.

The World Food Programme has stated that action is essential to avoid the consequences of humanity moving from a crisis of underproduction and disruption of food to a widespread hunger catastrophe that will set back sustainable development worldwide. Urgent solutions are needed to answer the question: how can we end this global food crisis before it becomes a hunger catastrophe?

Education

How can we fight inequality through education?

With the poorest 50% of the global population sharing just 8.5% of total income, millions still face discrimination based on race, gender, religion, or sexual orientation; inequality remains one of the biggest challenges we face today. Fighting inequality has and will continue to demand the participation of all parts of society, with education being among the most important.

Education has been well-documented as a powerful tool for combating inequality. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) stated in 2016 that 'education reduces inequality of opportunities and outcomes, not only for individuals but also for society as a whole, with the Journal of Human Resources finding that increasing education levels can help to reduce poverty, particularly among women.

The respondents of the One Young World GCP survey affirmed that education must be at the centre of the agenda, with 'Ensuring inclusive and equal education and learning opportunities' being ranked the most important Sustainable Development Goal of all. This, in the context of 53.3% of respondents reporting their country's education system quality is less than 5/10, demonstrates the need for urgent action both to bolster our education systems worldwide and to utilise them to tackle the challenge of inequality.

As no child is born with prejudice, how can we fight inequality through education? Furthermore, with more than three quarters of respondents believing that their current education system is not doing enough to raise awareness around LGBTQ+ issues, what systemic changes need to take place within education sectors to tackle all forms of discrimination?

Mental Health

How can we make mental health a priority?

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), an estimated 1 in 7 people globally are living with some kind of poor mental health. Deepened by the climate crisis, the COVID-19 Pandemic, economic insecurity, conflict, social pressures, and social media exposure, poor mental health remains a significant and global challenge that requires us to look not just at our healthcare systems but our societies at large. Prioritising mental well-being will require the input and collaboration of various decision-makers, from employers to educators, from the tech industry to policymakers.

The WHO estimates that global rates of common conditions, such as depression and anxiety, have increased by an estimated 25% since 2019, an increase that has disproportionately impacted people under 25. Data received through the One Young World Global Consultation survey outlines that young leaders do not believe that this rise has been met sufficiently.

67.8% of young leaders surveyed stated that the provision of mental health care in their country is either poor or insufficient, with just 18% reporting their country's health care offering is good or excellent. 71% of those surveyed stated that financial pressure was the key driver of their poor mental health, with 69.3% of those surveyed calling on policymakers to prioritise increasing capacity within health systems to widen access to mental health treatment.

Mental health interconnects with a wide variety of other global challenges, from climate change to the cost of living crisis - now is the time to ask: how can we make mental health a priority?

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