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# The Global Students Dialogue

*Fighting Inequality and Poverty Through Student Action.*

MAKERERE UNIVERSITY, KAMPALA UGANDA

HOSTED BY:



Contributing to the Africa **We want.**

EVENT PARTNERS



## ABOUT THE GLOBAL STUDENTS DIALOGUE

The Global Students Dialogue is a series of Forums, conversations, and meetings that will be attended by university students, academia, leaders and emerging leaders in Africa and across the world. The dialogues are organized in the spirit of strengthening student movements, student leadership action, and designing strategies for students taking action on important development issues. The main goal of the dialogue is to engage with student leaders in devising creative and actionable solutions to today's complex global and community challenges.

In an informative and intellectual exchange, the meeting provides critical insights into global trends by pairing Africa students with students from around the world.

In the next three years, the LÉO Africa Global Student Dialogues will be hosted in Uganda, Rwanda, Canada and the USA through engagement with Student Unions and related University associations.

## POVERTY AND INEQUALITY OUTLOOK

Over the last half of a century, the gap between the rich and the poor has widened more than ever before. The average income of the richest 10% of the population is about nine times that of the poorest 10% across the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries. The drivers of this Inequality include globalization, skill-biased technological change and failures in countries' policy approaches.

The biggest global effect of inequality, especially in income terms among the citizens, has been the rise in terrorism and extremism. Richard Barret, in his study on *“foreign Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) fighters in Syria”*, notes that “Terrorist groups tend to be more inclusive, better organized and better financed than many government establishments”. This resonates with the view that inequality and exclusivity have played a big role in feeding into terrorism.

Terrorist establishments attract young people through a promise of inclusiveness and personal economic success as Barret adds, “Terrorists tend to offer a sense of identity or belonging to disillusioned teenagers trying to find purpose and make their mark”. It is therefore safe to assert that Inequality fuels modern day terrorism

In Africa, poverty continues to be a constant feature of everyday reality, the promising growth numbers and GDP figures notwithstanding. From a perspective that, poverty is more about how a society shares resources than how much resources there are overall, many African countries are very poor, others are wealthier (often from oil, minerals and other natural resources) but with extreme inequalities between their citizens in both cases. The most common result of inequality in Africa has been social and political tensions.

Only this year, many of the tensions in Africa have been as a result of the various forms of inequality, notably, the unequal distribution of jobs opportunities for young people across Africa. There have been a series of Unemployment demonstrations in Africa since March this year in Zambia, Morocco, Zimbabwe, Malawi and Uganda. The height of tensions however, was the attacks on African migrant workers in South Africa in April, 2015, as native South Africans demonstrated against the unequal access to jobs and other economic opportunities.

According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), 1,727 migrants have drowned in the Mediterranean while trying to cross to Europe since the start of 2015. Many of the migrants from Africa have been pushed by the high poverty rates in their home countries while others seek better opportunities or a decent livelihood in Europe.

## STUDENT MOVEMENTS IN A GLOBAL COMMUNITY

Student's movements have been at the forefront of social and political change throughout modern history. From standing against racism around the world, fighting Idi Amin, boycotting and protesting the Vietnam War in the United States, to demanding a new China through protests in Tiananmen square, to this day regarded as an essential step of the democratic revolution in China, supporting the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa, student participation has become more crucial than ever for any progressive movement as well as influencing public opinion and government action.

During apartheid South Africa for example, a campaign waged by an 18-year student *David Kenvyn* in London against Barclays Bank, eventually succeeded in persuading the bank to stop engaging with Apartheid South Africa. In 1980, succumbing to pressure, the Camden Council; one of the 32 local council authorities in the United Kingdom capital of London withdrew its funds from Barclays. One year later, the Labour Party in the United Kingdom listened to student demands and called upon all labour-controlled councils to close their accounts. In 1986, 15 local councils boycotted Barclays. The campaign did not stop until Barclays divested completely from the Apartheid regime in March 1987.

At Concordia University, the Concordia Volunteer Abroad Program – is a good example of student action and the impact it can have on communities. The organization founded ten years ago by two students *Peter Schiefke* and *Awel Uwihanganye*, started as a result of a resolve by Concordia University students to make a contribution in post conflict reconstruction of Northern Uganda after decades of war. Since then, the organization has been dedicated to social justice and community development through education programs, community support initiatives; and giving young people opportunity to offer service through volunteerism. The organization supported by a fee-levy paid by students from Concordia

University, is an ultimate expression of the student commitment to global civic responsibility, experiential learning and taking action.

All these actions require consciousness, self-awareness, and change of personal perceptions created by exposure and meaningful dialogue that eventually leads to a belief in ability of student movements to actually make a difference by shaping ideas, events and actions of the time.

This belief in ability to cause change, can lead to meaningful contribution by young people, a critical factor in achieving global aspirations such as advancing growth and entrepreneurship.

## PARTICIPATING IN THE LÉO AFRICA GLOBAL STUDENT DIALOGUE

Universities by their very nature are hubs of activism, of knowledge and enlightenment. In a collective effort towards the practical application of such energy and knowledge, students from Canada, will engage with University students from Uganda in a conversational like Forum that will challenge participants to reflect on the role young people can play in in contribution to solutions of today's global challenges. Specifically, discussions will focus on shaping ideas of how student movements can make positive contributions towards addressing today's increasing inequalities and growing poverty.

A total of 80 student participants will be hosted to a one-day Forum, focusing discussion on ideas towards actionable and creative solutions that will leverage the energy and capacity of student movements towards contributing to a *World that we Want*. The meeting will also strengthen participant commitment to global civic engagement.

## RATIONALE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE LÉO AFRICA GLOBAL STUDENT DIALOGUE

- a) Broaden student perspectives, to think differently and critically on emerging issues that cut across the global community and the world.
- b) To contribute to the advancement of society by transforming theoretical knowledge into practice that translates into actionable ideas with measurable impact
- c) Encourage forms of practical solidarity given the unifying challenges faced by the world today that require collective measurable action in addressing today's challenges
- d) Engagement with public officials on the desired pro-change perspective on leadership
- e) Encourage more student volunteering within their own communities in addressing poverty

- f) Encourage students to reflect on alternative methods to effect change such as using electoral democracy advance student movements

## MEETING STRUCTURE

The *Global Student Dialogue* will be a full day event with individual presentation, panel discussions and breakaway sessions.

Daniel Laviguer, the Executive Direct CVAP, will deliver the opening presentation; the Oxfam Country Director Peter Kamalingin will deliver a keynote address.

Awel Uwhanganye, CEO at the LeO Africa Forum will have one-on-one conversation with a prominent actor in the area of poverty action, or a representative of institutional effort addressing this issue. The conversation will be informed by insights from the keynote address.

The conversation around the keynote address will be followed by a panel discussion with youth and students in a conversation on how student movements can be active in contributing to the effort of addressing poverty and inequality in our societies today.

The later half of the day will include two breakaway sessions on specific topics related to addressing the key questions on poverty and unemployment.

The afternoon session will culminate into an overview statement by senior entrepreneur and philanthropist, followed by a conversation moderated by Julius Labeja; the CVAP Director of Operations in Uganda.

The conference will conclude with a networking reception over cocktails, and other refreshments. The reception will be hosted at the venue of the meeting.

## SPECIFIC OUTCOMES OF THE DIALOGUE

- a) The dialogue shall initiate a students'-based and/or students-led social action against poverty and growing inequality that will start with individual action, and prescribe other actions that can be taken at student leadership level, and at university administration level
- b) Participating students shall sign an action pledge to support all actions, policies, initiatives, dialogues and events through their students' unions and other formations

- c) Concrete proposals shall be made to University administrators on actions necessary to create a conducive environment for positive student action, and orientation to social consciousness among students
- d) University administrators shall be rallied to support students actions aimed at contributing to solutions geared at addressing and averting poverty and inequality
- e) The main outcome from the meeting as a guide, will be production of a working document in form of a blue-print on possible actions by individual actors, student leadership, and university administration on addressing effects, causes and solutions to poverty and inequality, with specific actions and a follow up mechanism
- f) The Forum shall initiate a program of action with key universities around the work in sharing the blue print, and engage in advocacy and debate through media platforms to raise awareness and call for action to reduce poverty and inequality.

## ABOUT THE LÉO AFRICA FORUM

We provide a platform for young and emerging leaders to engage in dialogue and discussions on important development issues that influence the future outlook of the continent. We specifically contribute to developing and shaping ideas and values of Africa's next generation of leaders, through engaging in discourse on issues of the day, and answering questions on pressing issues. We also expose emerging leaders to new ways and ideas through trainings, exposure to information and intellectual debates at public lectures, conferences, and high-level meetings. In this endeavor, the Forum puts particular focus on building mutually beneficial partnerships with others at home and around the world.

In shaping discussions, we interact with African and global perspectives on issues of leadership and economy, exploring the role and responsibility of various actors and players, in being part of the progressive conversation on Africa's transformation.

Given the critical role the economy, governance, and leadership play in shaping private and public sector environments, we focus on hosting Forums around economic and leadership questions as flagship events. These events are complimented by other key Forums, themed conferences, distinguished lectures, roundtable discussions, seminars and workshops.