

**The 4th Melaka International Youth Dialogue
28-30th June 2004**

DECLARATION

Youth Participation in Decision-Making Processes

Preamble

We, the participants of the 4th Melaka International Youth Dialogue (MIYD), convened in Melaka from the 28th - 30th of June 2004 to discuss Youth Participation in Decision-Making Processes.

Over 200 participants from 43 countries around the world attended this MIYD.

The focus of this dialogue was to empower youth to be active participants in decision-making process in issues that affect them, thus ensuring that they make informed decisions.

The dialogue was based on major issues affecting youth:

- i) Individual knowledge and skills development for effective youth participation in decision-making processes
- ii) Overcoming barriers to effective youth participation in decision-making processes at community level
- iii) Enhancing institutional capacity of youth organizations for effective youth participation in decision-making processes

After thorough evaluation through plenary sessions, workshops and side events we, the MIYD participants identified challenges in decision-making processes that youth face today.

We, as MIYD participants from around the world have put together this document with recommendations that we strongly feel need to be implemented for effective youth participation in decision-making processes.

Challenges and Recommendations

1. Barrier - Lack of Quality Education

Recommendations:

- Make education available to all.
- Further emphasis on character building.
- Improve education facilities.
- Employ committed and qualified staff in the education system.
- Change the education system from being objective to being rational, shifting emphasis from academic results to personal development.

Refer to Appendix

2. Barrier - Inadequate personal and social education

Recommendations:

- Provide parenting skills to youth (potential parents) and the family unit to allow a more holistic development for the young person.
- Make informal education available to all to ensure that a child is developed socially, emotionally, mentally, spiritual and physically.

3. Barrier - Negative attitude and perceptions

Recommendations:

- Ensure that youth participation is interesting, engaging and enjoyable.
- Create awareness of youth rights to encourage meaningful participation.

4. Barrier - Negative Peer Pressure

Recommendations:

- Educate youth through interactive methods concerning their rights to ensure that their opinions are not compromised by others.
- Create youth programs to sensitize youth to express their own views and not that of their peers.

5. Barrier - Poor dissemination of information

Recommendations:

- Make information available to all.

- Enhance youths own media channels through newsletters, radio and television programmes.

6. Barrier - Poor media coverage

Recommendations:

- Obtain Good Media coverage/exposure by educating the media on youth issues.
- Highlight the work of youth organizations within the community.

7. Barrier - Domination of adult influence incompatible with young people's wants/needs.

Recommendations:

- Create awareness groups that target all levels within society.
- Youths should actively and effectively be involved in designing the structures that govern, and issues that concern, us, specifically at organisational level.

8. Barrier - Economic and Social Class leading to Inequality & Discrimination in treatment

Recommendation:

- Encourage inclusive participation from all youth without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of her/his race, colour, gender, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, orientation, property, disability, birth or other status.

9. Barrier- Gender Inequality

Recommendations:

- Encourage young women to realise and exercise their rights in male dominated societies. This will allow more women to become involved in decision making processes.
- Lobby the government to create equal opportunities for all young people.

10. Barrier - Poverty & Lack of Societal Support

Recommendations:

- Empower youth to become entrepreneurs.
- Government, NGOs, private sector working together to provide poverty eradication.

- Implement infrastructure that support the creation of job opportunities for young people and provide a means for young people to support themselves financially, gain independence and self-sufficiency.
- Government to offer support to community based programmes to alleviate poverty and create a better quality of life.

11. Barrier - Inadequate capacity to affect change

Recommendations:

- Governments of the world should ratify and implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child, UN Declaration on Human Rights and the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights; and to abolish or amend all laws and policies that are not in agreement with these treaties.
- Ensure that the civil liberties of all youth are protected, including the right to voice their concerns in all areas of public affairs and the right to public assembly.
- Look to youth organisations as partners in decision-making, and youth building – so that engagement may be constructive, not contentious.
- Youth must be encouraged to comply with appropriate protocol.

12. Barrier - Political Situation that prevent youth from active participation

Recommendations:

- Involve youth in Peace Making Processes at the national and international level.
- Create awareness on the objectives of political parties to ensure that youths make informed voting decisions.

13. Barrier - Inadequate organisational structures within youth organizations

Recommendations:

- Work to eliminate bureaucratic red tape and corruption, nepotism and cronyism from all levels of public service.
- Discourage the influence of donor implementation of programmes and decision making that hinder youth from participating effectively ie ensure organisations are principle-driven and NOT donor-driven.
- Work in participation with other organisations/private sector to increase access to more avenues for funding. Look at alternative means of raising funds, and minimising costs.
- Ensure youth participation is actively sought and maximised – and appreciated for the value and diversity of experience and opinions that it adds, as opposed to mere token participation.
- Organise regular and accessible trainings for leadership skills (e.g. public speaking trainings, gender sensitising workshops, motivational seminars) specifically for young people to encourage youth initiative and generate enthusiasm. Further, allow young people to take on leadership roles to build up capacities through experience.

- Enhance development capabilities through dialogue and trainings which will create motivation, build confidence and encourage risk taking amongst youth that will abolish the culture of fear and convince young people that they are capable, rational and responsible citizens and members of society, able and willing to affect social change for the better.

Conclusion

We young people have to take it upon ourselves to apply pressure at the right points to the right people at the right time. This is the only way we can have the recommendations of this dialogue implemented in our individual countries.

A step in the right direction would be to create youth forums for lobbying starting from community level rising to international levels.

The power lies within YOU to affect change. Go forth and use it!

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Appendix

Quality Education Diagram

