AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL GHANA HUMAN RIGHTS YOUTH CAMP 2020

THEME: THE YOUTH; ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE THROUGH HUMAN RIGHTS PROMOTION AND PROTECTION

INTRODUCTION

Human rights are fundamental rights and freedoms to which every human being is entitled. They focus on individual, political, civil, spiritual, social, economic, and cultural aspects of our lives. When human rights are respected, they allow us to develop to our fullest potential and create the foundation for peace within and among nations. The UN Charter, which was adopted in 1945, was the first international document to recognize the protection and promotion of human rights as an obligation to be carried out by individual, as well as collective states (Langley, 1999). Notwithstanding the enormous progress in developing standards and systems to promote and protect human rights; human rights violations still persist around the world.

The climate emergency is one of the greatest threats to human rights of our age, and young people are likely to be among those most affected by it. Millions of people are already suffering from the catastrophic effects of climate change. Those effects will only worsen and affect more people unless governments and corporations take urgent action to slash carbon emissions in the shortest possible time. Unfortunately, virtually all governments are failing to put in place effective plans to combat climate change, in what might be the biggest intergenerational human rights violation in history.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

The threat that climate change poses to human rights cannot be overstated. The safety of billions of people is currently at risk due to extreme weather events and
increased vulnerability to disease. The right to health is also under threat, as people are at a greater risk of injury, disease and death due to more intense heatwaves and fires. Under-nutrition is increasing as a result of diminished food production in poor regions, food and water borne diseases are becoming more common, and children exposed to traumatic events such as natural disasters are suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Climate change also threatens the right to housing, as extreme weather events are already destroying people’s homes, leaving them displaced. Drought, erosion, flooding and sea-level rises are changing environments and threatening the homes of millions of people. Finally, a combination of factors such as melting snow and ice, reduced rainfall, higher temperatures and rising sea levels show that climate change is affecting and will continue to affect the quality and quantity of water resources. Already, one billion people do not have access to clean water.1

EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE IN GHANA

In Ghana, climate change has already caused a rise in temperatures and a reduction in rainfall. Rainfall has also become a lot more variable and harder to predict. These changes have already had a negative impact on Ghana’s economy, and that impact will only worsen over time. Ghana is especially vulnerable to climate change because its economy relies very heavily on agriculture, which is a very climate sensitive sector. The country is also likely to see a rise in migration, as well increased vulnerability to illness as water scarcity creates sanitation problems and urban flooding increases the incidence of malaria and cholera2.

Ghana’s government has adopted a national climate change policy to ensure a climate resilient and climate compatible economy while achieving sustainable development through equitable low carbon economic growth for Ghana3. Young Reporters for The Environment Ghana, an NGO has embarked on strikes calling on the government to institute stringent action plan to deal with the looming danger associated with climate change, the effect of which has ravaged some countries already.

3 MEST: Ghana National Climate Change Policy 2012
Ghanaians can do their part to combat climate change by demanding that the government and major corporations take proactive measures to slow the progress of climate change and ensure that Ghana can adapt to it. These measures include reducing carbon emissions, divesting from fossil fuels, increasing the robustness of infrastructure development, improving societal awareness and preparedness for future climate change, and enhancing the living standards of vulnerable groups.

Local farmers need to be aware of the risks posed to their livelihood by climate change and need to be provided with the tools and abilities they need in order to adapt to the changing climate.

As the largest population group on the globe, and as a generation whose future depends on immediate action to combat climate change, the youth need to be involved in climate activism. They need to be part of the formulation, implementation and evaluation of plans and strategies that concern and affect their lives and their futures.

It is against this background that Amnesty International Ghana seeks to bring together Youth within and outside the Human Rights fraternity to promote a better understanding of their role in combating climate change and advancing Human Rights.

ABOUT THE ORGANIZERS

Amnesty International Ghana is part of a global movement of more than 7 million people who take injustice personally. We are campaigning for a world where human rights are enjoyed by all. Amnesty International investigates and exposes the facts, whenever and wherever abuses happen. We lobby governments and other powerful groups such as companies to make sure they keep their promises and respect international law. By telling the powerful stories of the people we work with, we mobilize millions of supporters around the world to campaign for change and to stand in defense of activists on the frontline. We support people to claim their rights through education and training. We believe that it is better to light a candle than curse the darkness.

ABOUT THE YOUTH CAMP

The Amnesty International Ghana Human Rights Youth Camp is an annual convocation of young people who believe and are ready to practice and
educate people on human rights. The Camp brings together young people from all over the country and around the world to discussing current human rights issues which is of global and national relevance. The Youth Camp has been running for the past 5 years.

Season facilitators are brought to this Camp where young people ready to achieve human rights impact are brought together to learn practical ways of achieving human rights impact. The youth at this Camp are equipped with tools, skills and knowledge to advance issues discussed at the Youth Camp.

This year the focus of the youth camp is on Climate Change and Human Rights.

OBJECTIVES OF THE CAMP

The aim of the conference is to:

- Promote better understanding of the causes and negative effects of climate change on human rights and the actions youth can take in order to prevent it and reverse its effects;
- Listen to and amplify the voices of youth regarding the global climate emergency;
- Create a list of actions that youth can take in order to pressure governments and corporations to reduce their carbon emissions and
- Provide opportunities for the youth to develop their skills, knowledge and attitudes for climate activism.

EXPECTED OUTCOME

- The causes and impact of climate change on human rights is better understood as are the actions the youth can take in order to prevent it and reverse its effects;
- Platform for youth to effectively contribute to national decision making on climate change in Ghana;
- Networks of youth created to advocate for climate change in Ghana
- Youth are better prepared for climate activism, having acquired new skills, knowledge and attitudes.

VENUE and DATE

Date: 19th July to 22nd July 2020
Venue: University of Ghana, Legon Campus

PARTICIPANTS

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