

## **UNESCO International Youth Day**

**By: Marsha Hall**

Despite almost every nation grappling with its own challenges, there is a global push for diversity, equity, and inclusion for everyone – regardless of race or ethnicity. At the core of this thrust are common topics and pervasive societal issues ranging from climate change to social justice, health disparities, food insecurity, unemployment, equitable access to technology, and a clean and safe environment. However, these debates are no longer limited by age or the domain of a few, as is evidenced in the popular triumvirate: Baby boomers, Gen-Xers, and Millennials. Therefore, the theme for this year's International Youth Day - *Intergenerational Solidarity: Creating a World for All Ages* - within the context of achieving the sustainable development goals, is quite appropriate and urgently requires 'all hands on deck'. According to UNESCO:

The purpose is to amplify the message that action is needed from all generations to achieve the Agenda 2030 and its 17 SDGs, and leave no one behind. It is important to highlight that this International Youth Day 2022 aims to raise awareness about certain barriers to intergenerational solidarity, in particular age discrimination, which affects people, young and old, at the same time that it has detrimental effects on society as a whole.

This signifies that we cannot ignore the need for stronger actions in an increasingly ageist and ableist culture perpetuating stereotypes and prejudices against persons based on their age and how we perceive the functioning of their body and mind.

### **History of International Youth Day**

International Youth Day is the outcome of numerous United Nations resolutions that were adopted over time. These resolutions aimed to raise awareness of the global difficulties facing young people. The United Nations adopted a resolution in 1965 which supported the "declaration on the promotion of peace, mutual respect, and understanding amongst peoples among Youth" and was the first of many resolutions that would eventually result in the establishment of International Youth Day. Thus, an International Youth Year was established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1979. This resolution emphasized participation, advancement, and peace as its main priorities. Then, in 1985, the Assembly adopted a new resolution that

introduced regulations centred on the young subgroups. Both urban and rural youth were among them. Youth with impairments and young women were also included. Finally, on August 12, International Youth Day was formally proclaimed when the United Nations enacted Resolution 54/120 in 1999.

### **Call to Action**

Globally, several countries are faced with an aging population, declining birth rates, and rising life expectancy. It is pivotal that conventional relationships between generations and the different dynamics inherent in persons of all ages be redefined, leveraged, and celebrated. International Youth Day is an occasion for governments around the world to recognize the importance of young people as change agents and to promote awareness of the issues and challenges that they face. Governments are urged to amplify the voice of the youths, focus on their needs, and support them as they lead by example in conversations about the intergenerational gap and how we can promote meaningful engagements and healthy interaction between individuals of all ages.

The global health pandemic has exemplified that both older people and youths can make impactful contributions to a healthy and equally inclusive society. Living and working in a multigenerational world that is constantly connected to social media triggers intergenerational discussions. In a sense, these platforms can be understood as unifying spaces. Whether it is Facebook, YouTube, or the viral sensation called Tik-Tok, people of all ages are represented and redefining the ways in which knowledge is shared. The appeal of these social media platforms, while not completely age-discriminatory, highlights that opportunities exist for people of all ages. It is on such platforms that communities coexist amidst *hashtags, like, share, subscribe, tweets, and retweet* buttons.

### **Active Engagement**

Fostering intergenerational solidarity requires work and the practice is certainly not a one-way street. Age group stigmas and barriers impede intergenerational relationships, which can have negative effects on both individuals and society. The global aim is to not deprioritize and exclude the young or old from important dialogues since their collective experiences and influences cannot be overlooked in the shaping of universal policies affecting all, particularly at a time

when the scale of world issues makes it impossible for either generation to remain absent from contributing to their solution.

The African Caribbean Institute of Jamaica/ Jamaica Memory Bank encourages and supports national, regional, and multinational institutions' actionable priorities that provide inclusive platforms for voices of all generations to be heard and visibility highlighting their tangible achievements on this International Youth Day.



**Sources:**

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1354856520930905>

<https://www.un.org/en/observances/youth-day>

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[International Youth Day 2022 \(unesco.org\)](#)

[International Youth Day \(unfpa.org\)](#)

[Younger People and Ageism during Covid-19 – Ageing Equal \(ageing-equal.org\)](#)